

AUTHORS,
AUDIENCES,
AND OLD ENGLISH
VERSE



THOMAS A. BREDEHOFT



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To the memory of Nick Howe, whose teaching, influence, and advice so literally made it possible.

And to Rosemary Hathaway, whose living influence makes so many other things possible.

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Preface

In ways that might not be immediately obvious, this book is a companion volume to my 2005 book, *Early English Metre*. In that book, I outlined a new formal analysis for Old English verse, including a detailed metrical description of what I called ‘late Old English verse,’ a tradition of poetry that differs widely from the classical verse exemplified by *Beowulf*. Along the way, I argued that a great number of works (specifically, works in Ælfric’s rhythmical, alliterative style) that have been conventionally described as prose are, in fact, formally indistinguishable from late Old English verse. To that extent, *Early English Metre* was not only a book about metre, but an intervention into our conventional understanding of Old English literary history.

In this book, I set out to extend the work of revising our view of Anglo-Saxon literary history, building not only on my work in *Early English Metre* but also on some of my recent and forthcoming work on interrelations between Old English and Old Saxon poetry, as well as on recent publications that have identified (for the first time) other passages of unrecognized late Old English verse. Indeed, some texts discussed as poems in this book have not been previously identified as verse. Thus, while I discuss a number of very familiar Old English texts throughout, I also consider a number of Old English texts that readers may not be accustomed to thinking of as poetic, if they have thought about them at all. But again, Old English verse traditions clearly varied across time, and the arguments made in this book reflect my conviction that it is important to consider the whole range of those traditions in all of their complexity. Throughout, where my arguments concern the dates of poems, I attempt to contextualize my arguments by references to current thinking on dating issues, with special attention to R.D. Fulk’s important *A History of Old English Meter*, which remains the central authority on questions of poetic dating. Strikingly, although my metrical perspective differs from that used by Fulk, and my arguments look at dating issues in ways quite distinct from Fulk’s, our conclusions are rarely in

conflict.

Nevertheless, one of the observations that drives this book is the recognition that, just as the advent of Sievers-based metrical analysis has led scholars to see only one acceptable form for Old English verse, the arrival of oral-formulaic studies upon the scene has perhaps limited our vision of Old English poetry to a single tradition. Indeed, the two critical trends reinforce one another, with our understanding of Old English poems so dominated by the combination of Sieversian metrics and a presumed oral heritage that works apparently lacking in oral roots (and exhibiting those roots primarily through the traditional diction, formulas, and metre associated with the Sieversian perspective) have been largely excluded from consideration as verse at all. Yet there is no clear Anglo-Saxon basis for the resulting line of demarcation between Old English verse and prose: it is an artefact of our understanding – or lack thereof. In the introduction to this book, I begin a reconsideration of the meaning of this boundary line by addressing the ways in which Anglo-Saxons and modern readers have conceptualized the roles of author and audience in relation to written or inscribed Old English verse. Taking Michel Foucault's well-known 'What Is an Author?' essay as a touchstone text, I attempt to trace the relevant dynamics of authorship, anonymity, and audience through a careful consideration of two more or less identifiable moments at which Old English poetry was inscribed: in Bede's famous story of Cædmon and in the two poems authored by Wulfstan the Homilist but presented anonymously in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Together, these two moments remind us of the complexity of how textuality and oral tradition interrelate with surviving Old English poetic texts.

I come at a set of similar issues from a rather different angle in the first chapter. I begin the chapter by examining how concepts of authorship and authority interrelate in the context of the apparent reproducibility of Old English verse in manuscript contexts. It is no accident, I argue, that anonymous poems tend to be those that survive in unique copies, while poems associated with named authors are frequently (although not always) preserved in multiple copies. Such a circumstance suggests just how important the relationship between authority and named authorship was during the Anglo-Saxon period, even in the realm

of Old English verse – despite some recent scholars’ claims to the contrary. The second half of the chapter takes up the issue of naming and poetic expression by considering the inscriptional tradition of Old English verse, a tradition of verse expression that is explicitly literate in its orientation and yet which has as much claim to antiquity and cultural importance as the oral-formulaic tradition itself, even if its surviving records are brief and few. In particular, the inscriptional tradition involves a configuration of naming, authority, and formulaic poetic expression that very much helps to place the more familiar tradition of manuscript poems more clearly into its Anglo-Saxon context.

In [chapter 2](#), I shift my focus to the late ninth century and the court of King Alfred. Building on my recent arguments about the influence of Old Saxon verse in the late ninth century, this chapter begins a reconsideration of the significance of what is usually understood as formulaic evidence, which will also be taken up in later chapters. Specifically, I suggest that while the original composition of many of the anonymous poems cannot be accurately localized, we can trace the origins of some of them, and that we can usefully distinguish between two types of Old English poetic phrases: those that are truly traditional and shared across most or all of the classical poetic tradition, and those that are innovative. For example, Old Saxon formulas that first appear in Old English poetry in Alfredian works should probably be interpreted as not having been a part of the Old English oral-formulaic tradition, but rather as new formulas entering Old English verse through literate processes. Two important conclusions emerge from the evidence presented: first, Alfred’s court seems to mark a crucial step in the textualization of Old English poetic composition, including the development of a tradition of what can only be called ‘literate-formulaic composition,’ and second, the compositional strategies employed by Alfredian poets like Bishop Wulfsige also reveal a number of classical Old English poems that were likely to have been known at Alfred’s court, including *Genesis A*, *Beowulf*, *Elene*, and *Andreas*. Alfred’s court, then, stands not only as a key site for authors of Old English verse, but also as an important and previously unidentified audience for specific poems as well.

[Chapter 3](#) follows this argument up by considering the tenth century and the changes related to the tenth-century development

of the late Old English metrical system. Here, a formulaic and metrical examination of the tenth-century poems of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suggests that they, too, were composed in the same ‘literate-formulaic tradition’ as was practised in the Alfredian period, and using much the same selection of source poems. I begin by showing that *Riddle 40*, already known to have been a tenth-century composition, borrows formulas from a completely different set of source texts than the Alfredian poems, a striking confirmation that its composition was not only ‘literate-formulaic’ but that it can be localized at some centre where the Alfredian library was inaccessible. The most likely such place, I suggest, was Dunstan’s Glastonbury. Further, I argue that the four tenth-century *Chronicle* poems collected in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (hereafter, the ASPR) were probably composed by the same anonymous individual, who was also likely responsible for *The Menologium*; contextual and other evidence suggests Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester or a member of his circle. In the final portion of the chapter, I undertake a similar examination of *The Battle of Maldon*, suggesting that the author of this poem, too, used a similar literate-formulaic system, although he was even farther from an understanding of at least some of the practices of classical Old English poetry. Interestingly, the *Maldon* poet’s fondness for vanishingly rare Old English words and phrases almost certainly marks his style as one that would have been difficult for contemporary readers, as the literate-formulaic compositional process seems to have involved extensive searches of classical poems for lexical and formulaic models. Further, the range of poems seemingly mined by the *Maldon* poet suggests that he may well have been particularly influenced by the late-tenth-century (or even slightly later) production of the Junius, Vercelli, and Nowell books.

At the end of the tenth century, at roughly the same time as *Maldon* was written, Ælfric began composing in his trademark alliterative style, which I have argued elsewhere was a poetic style, not prose. Thus, I take up an examination of Ælfric’s works in [chapter 4](#), suggesting that his use of alliteration (especially regarding ‘g’ and ‘s-’ clusters) may derive directly from the practices of the tenth-century poets he might have read at school. Likewise his use of characteristically poetic diction may have been seriously underestimated simply because his works have

been conventionally seen as prose. That is, the number of words that appear either only in Ælfric or in the larger category ‘Ælfric’s alliterative works plus the ASPR’ indicates that a shift in how we designate Ælfric’s works would lead to an expanded understanding of the range of poetic diction, although (as I discuss) poetic diction was a fairly common feature of contemporary homilies. Further, I examine some aspects of Ælfric’s own literate-formulaic compositional practices, suggesting not only that formulaic composition was a hallmark of his style, but also that he might well have known the tenth-century *Chronicle* poems. A final section of the chapter suggests briefly that Ælfric may even have had some actual knowledge of *The Battle of Maldon*.

In [chapter 5](#), I take up other aspects of the frequent eleventh-century interchange between poetic and homiletic discourses. While modern readers have tended to see these two discourses as exclusive, the remarkable degree of interchange between them in the tenth and eleventh centuries attests to the vitality of both genres during the period, and how important it is for us not to downplay that vitality by asserting the existence of a sort of muddy middle ground between prose and verse. The use of poetic language in a prose text, after all, must be intended to strike the audience as at least a temporary shift in register. And such use of poetic language was indeed widespread. Besides Ælfric’s alliterative homilies as discussed in [chapter 4](#), there is clear evidence that Wulfstan knew and was influenced by *Andreas*, and at least four different anonymous homilies (exemplified by Vercelli II, Vercelli XXI, Napier XXIX, and a homily on the phoenix) also used poetic models directly. The evidence is strengthened by considering a pair of additional, previously unrecognized Old English poems (one of which is also a previously unidentified source for Napier XXIX), for which I provide provisional editions in an Appendix. But also, eleventh-century homilies occasionally employ rhyme in ways reminiscent of late Old English verse, and I discuss the implications of the degree to which the anonymous *Seven Sleepers* homily is especially characterized by rhyme. Finally, I look at two late eleventh-century poems from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, noting that both seem to have relied on Ælfric’s works as ‘literate-formulaic’ sources for their own formulas, hypothesizing that St

Wulfstan II of Worcester may have composed them – a last anonymous (but potentially identifiable) ‘author’ of Old English verse, and a reader of Old English verse as well (not only of Ælfric’s works, but also one of the previously unidentified poems considered in the chapter, which is preserved, among other places, in the *Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*).

In the concluding chapter, I try to pick up once again the various strands of argument made throughout the book in order to outline a new vision of Old English poetry and its role within Old English literary history, a vision shaped by my readings of authorship, audience, and formulaic composition throughout the book. As even this brief summary of my arguments suggests, it is a vision that reassesses the importance of literate practice in the composition and appreciation of Old English verse, offering a new perspective on our own role as an audience for Old English poetry and how we might better align our own understandings of formulas, authorship, and anonymity with those apparently held by the Anglo-Saxons themselves.

Bibliographic Note

The presentation of data in this study is hampered, in some ways, by a lack of uniformity in the nature and style of published editions of Old English texts. Citations of most (but not all) Old English poetry will be given according to the lineation and format of The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (ASPR); exceptions will be noted. In parenthetical citations, tables, and footnotes, I will usually use more-or-less familiar abbreviated titles for citing passages from Old English poems (e.g., ‘*GDPref*’); in the main text I will generally use shortened titles involving only complete words (e.g., ‘Wulfsiges *Metrical Preface*’). Sometimes this may lead to an unpleasant clash, as *Christ II* is abbreviated ‘*ChristB*,’ but it seemed of value to stick to the well-known system regardless. Poems not included in the ASPR will be cited according to the most accessible or relevant editions, as noted when first discussed, and (where necessary) relineated to exhibit their metrical structure. Such relineations (and occasional other small changes of presentation) will be identified as being ‘adapted from’ the printed source. I provide translations only for poetic quotations longer than a single line; single lines and half-lines quoted as formal examples and parallels not subject to literary interpretation are left untranslated.

Although it is my conviction (and, in part, my argument here) that the alliterative works of Ælfric are best understood as verse, not all editions of such texts have made use of the ‘metrical’ lineation used, for example, in W.W. Skeat’s edition of Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*. Citations of Ælfrician and some other texts, then, will be according to line numbers for metrically lineated editions, line numbers for ‘prosaically lineated editions’ (where line numbers are consecutive throughout an individual work, as in Malcolm Godden’s edition of the second series of *Catholic Homilies*), and by page number (using ‘p.’ or ‘pp.’) for those where line numbers are not given or are not consecutive (such as Arthur Napier’s edition of ‘Wulfstan’ homilies). I generally use these conventions even when my own quotations have been

relineated to highlight or indicate the apparent metrical structure of a text, so that one 'metrical' line of a text will often be cited as falling on more than one line of its printed source. Individual Ælfrician works will usually be referenced by a short version of their most familiar titles followed by a parenthetical indication of the relevant edition, followed by the appropriate line numbers, as (for example) '*Julian and Basilissa* (LS IV) 196a,' which should be understood as the first half of line 196 of *The Passion of St. Julian and his Wife Basilissa*, which is item number IV in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* as edited by Skeat. One hopes that such references will effectively balance specificity and cumbersomeness.

Electronic resources have been instrumental in this study; all references to online electronic materials were initially made between September 2006 and April 2007 and usually checked or repeated during the summer and fall of 2008 (various dates), although I have not included more specific dates for individual searches, as the electronic resources themselves were stable during this period. In most cases, citations of verses or passages first identified through (for example) a Dictionary of Old English (DOE) online corpus search have been checked against the relevant printed editions, and I have usually quoted the passages in question from those original sources. In a very few cases, such checking has not been possible, and I have noted at those places that I am using the online corpus itself as my proximate source. References without quotations (e.g., a claim that a word is used in a gloss) are derived from the DOE online corpus without a check against the original printed source.

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organizers and audiences of these panels have a share in this work as well, though any blame for omissions, errors, infelicities, and cantankerous or idiosyncratic expressions and opinions are the author's alone.

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AUTHORS, AUDIENCES, AND OLD ENGLISH VERSE

Introduction: Authorship and Anonymity in Old English Verse

Surveys of Anglo-Saxon poetry often begin with a comment about the essential anonymity of Old English verse: modern readers typically understand Old English verse to be a highly traditional genre, characterized by shared formulaic diction, traditional expression, and – relatedly – anonymous composition. Discussing the anonymity of Old English verse, Sarah Larratt Keefer has recently made the point as follows:

It was generally unusual to know the names of any poets composing verse ... [T]he name and a brief biography of Cædmon, but no readily ascertainable works, are all we know of this earliest of English poets; a second name, and the poems in which this name appears like a signature, represent the rest of our knowledge of the other named authors of Old English verse, sacred or secular. (18)

Keefer refers, of course, to Cynewulf as the second named author.¹ It seems likely that, for most scholars, this perception of the pervasive anonymity of Old English verse is linked to the nature of Old English verse's oral heritage. R.D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain make the connection explicit in their recent survey of the field, writing: 'The orality of the medium explains why even late into the eleventh century, nearly all verse in Old English is anonymous: authorship is a concept foreign to a literature in which ancient traditions are continually refashioned and there is no single correct or original text of a work' (28) although the degree to which such a characterization actually applies in the later Anglo-Saxon period is far from clear.² But even within a truly oral tradition, the association between the lack of a 'correct or original text' and anonymity does not seem to have functioned as Fulk and Cain imply. Albert Lord, seemingly anticipating or responding to similar notions, points out that 'the author of an oral epic, that is, the text of a performance, is the

performer, the singer before us. Given normal eyesight on the part of the spectator, he is not multiple but singular ... A performance is unique; it is a creation, not a reproduction, and it can therefore have only one author' (101-2). We might do well, therefore, to stress not the anonymity of the poetry, but rather the much more concrete and directly observable fact that manuscripts rarely attribute poems to specific authors or writers. Although most of the Old English poems that survive to our time are not now accompanied by authorial names, their authors (whether in Lord's sense or ours) must frequently have been known to their original audiences. Presumably, neither the audiences of oral performances nor the readers of the earliest copies of manuscript poems would have experienced Old English poems as anonymous performances; the kind of anonymity we are faced with here must be more closely related to the physical endurance of written Old English verse, the very fact of its survival in manuscripts that themselves outlasted their original audiences. Anonymity is a peculiar aspect of Old English poetry's textualization, rather than its orality. As Mary Swan has put it in relation to Old English texts more generally, the 'frequent absence of identifiable authors is one of the most striking elements of Anglo-Saxon textual culture' ('Authorship' 72).³

Regardless, it is also the case that a more careful accounting of verse that can be attributed more or less reliably to named and historically localized individuals (a circumstance that does not apply even to Cynewulf) is far more extensive than scholars seem to have acknowledged, and the list includes a surprising number of the most widely known authors (and indeed authorities) of the period: Bede (to whom *Bede's Death Song* is sometimes attributed); King Alfred (credited with authorship of *The Meters of Boethius*, as well as *The Metrical Preface* and *Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*);⁴ Bishop Wulfsgie, now generally accepted as the author of *The Metrical Preface to Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues*; Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester (apparent author of at least two poetic lines: see Gretsches *Intellectual Foundations*, and [chapter 3](#) below); Wulfstan the Homilist (to whom two verse passages from the *Chronicle* are usually ascribed); Ælfric (if my arguments in *Early English Metre* are correct); Ealdred, archbishop of York (credited by William of Malmesbury with a rhyming and alliterating curse; see [chapter 5](#)

below); Wulfstan II, bishop of Worcester (probable author of two late poems in the *Chronicle* – for this attribution, also see [chapter 5](#)).⁵ To these eight prominent figures we might add the less well-known (and somewhat less localizable) Owun, glossator of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. D. 2. 19 (to which Owun added a brief poetic colophon); Ælfric and Wulfwine, two goldsmiths who included a poetic passage describing their contribution to London, British Library, Additional 40000; Willimot (who wrote two poetic scribbles in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 20); Ædred or Eanred (one of whom probably wrote or commissioned the text on the Lancashire ring); Æblmær and Æðelwold, commissioners of the Brussels cross; and the various named and unnamed commissioners of memorial stones at Carlisle, Dewsbury, Falstone, Great Urswick, Thornhill, and Wycliffe. While a number of these figures (like King Alfred or Bishop Wulfsig) may have commissioned rather than written some of the verses with which their names are connected, it is nevertheless clear that poetic expression was associated with specific named individuals in Anglo-Saxon England far more frequently than is usually claimed.

But it is also important to note that three of the poets on my list (Æthelwold of Winchester, Wulfstan the Homilist, and Wulfstan II of Worcester) can be associated with poetic texts only by stylistic or contextual evidence: the poems in question are presented without any sort of attribution in their surviving appearances. That is, modern readers including myself are often interested in questions of authorship in ways that appear to differ from Anglo-Saxon interests; one of the most powerful indices of our interest in authorship lies in the attempt (successful or otherwise) to attribute texts that circulated anonymously in Anglo-Saxon England to one or another of the named figures known to us from other sources. Modern critics of Old English verse may sometimes look upon the claims made by scholars a century or so ago with a feeling of some superiority, claims in which Cædmon was more or less confidently identified as the author of the Junius 11 poems, or in which *The Dream of the Rood* and sometimes other poems were ascribed to Cynewulf. Yet the assignment of authorial names to anonymously presented texts remains central to Anglo-Saxon studies, as the following comment from Clare Lees reveals:

Conventional literary history is well equipped to deal with concepts of authorship and associated notions of corpora, even for writers whose work is less obviously literary. As a result, Ælfric and Wulfstan are well-known figures within Anglo-Saxon literary history, and the establishment of their oeuvres and their methods of composition is one of the major achievements of the discipline. (24-5)

Somewhat submerged in this passage is an acknowledgment that ‘corpora’ for both Ælfric and Wulfstan needed to be established precisely because their works so often go unassociated with their names in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.⁶ However we approach Anglo-Saxon conceptions of authorship (or at least vernacular authorship), we must remain aware that our own practices of establishing corpora for authors (as important and meaningful as those practices are) are themselves an artefact of the Anglo-Saxon impulse towards anonymous presentation of texts in both prose and verse.

The issues involved in a reconsideration of authorship in relation to Anglo-Saxon verse are complex, and as it turns out, they are inseparable in some ways from a reconsideration of the role of audience. In order to articulate what is at stake in the connection between authorship and audience, it is useful to turn to Foucault’s notion of the ‘author function’ as a construct operative in a reader’s process of making meaning, and I undertake just such a critical manoeuvre in the following section.

Authorship and the Author Function in Old English Verse

In a recent and valuable discussion of women and writing in Anglo-Saxon England, Clare Lees and Gillian Overing put the link between anonymity and authorship in especially blunt terms: ‘It could be argued that since there is no “author-function” for the Anglo-Saxon period and since most vernacular writing is anonymous, our quest for women’s agency and identity via their writing is doomed to fail’ (95). In support for this claim about the absence of an Anglo-Saxon author function, Lees and Overing cite Carol Braun Pasternack’s *The Textuality of Old English Poetry*, where the central point is formulated succinctly and memorably: ‘Instead of implying an author, Old English verse implies

tradition' (19). Pasternack's book is itself an ambitious and carefully argued discussion of how traditional modes of expression (presumably inherited from oral tradition) manifest themselves in much of the surviving Old English poetic corpus. But whether the claim in question here is restricted only to vernacular poetry (as the force of Pasternack's arguments suggests), or extended to Anglo-Saxon culture more generally, as Lees and Overing seem to imply, it is important (as I have suggested above) to recall that anonymous presentation of texts in manuscripts is not necessarily equivalent to their anonymity for their original audiences – although it does leave those same texts anonymous to later readers, including ourselves. Further, it is important to note that the predominance of anonymity in Old English verse is not in itself determinative of the presence or absence of an author function.

The term 'author function,' of course, derives from Michel Foucault's important and influential essay 'What Is an Author?' and it is useful here to define some of the central terms that must be used in addressing Anglo-Saxon authorship, using Foucault's essay as a starting point.⁷ In brief, in the portions of the essay which concern us here, Foucault attempts to articulate how the concept of 'author' operates in contemporary critical circles, concluding that the figure of the author serves readers and critics as a guarantor of coherence in the separate but related fields of literary value; doctrinal, theoretical, or ideological positioning; style; and historical positioning. These four areas Foucault derives from Jerome's practice in authenticating works: that is, in their origin these criteria were used to decide if two works were by the same author, but Foucault suggests that they also 'do define the four modalities according to which modern criticism brings the author function into play' (111).

As this logic indicates, Foucault uses the term 'author function' to refer to a concept employed by readers in the very process of reading or criticism, and as such it is something conceptually distinct from the embodied human person who first encodes a text, although one of the uses to which the author function is clearly put is to identify (or attempt to identify) such embodied persons.⁸ This specific use of the author function Foucault terms 'authentication,' but his association of the author function with the name of the author (which probably contributes to Lees and

Overing's association between textual anonymity and a lack of an author function) is more complex. Specifically, Foucault understands the name of the author as serving to locate a text within the category of the literary: 'The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture ... A private letter may well have a signer – it does not have an author; a contract may have a guarantor – it does not have an author. An anonymous text posted on a wall has a writer – but not an author' (107-8). Such comments suggest that the names of individuals associated with non-literary genres serve as guarantors of different sorts of things than do the names of literary authors. And further, Foucault himself is aware that this association of the author's name with the literary is culture-specific and in need of historicization: 'There was a time when the texts that we today call "literary" ... were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status' (109). Pasternack's claim that 'instead of implying an author, Old English verse implies tradition' (19) locates that real or imagined ancientness in tradition, which is interpreted specifically as the legacy of an oral-formal poetic tradition.

Seen in this light, Pasternack's book takes as part of its project an attempt to historicize the question of the relation of written or inscribed Anglo-Saxon poetry to its textual anonymity, its general (although not complete, as discussed above) lack of named authors.⁹ Ultimately, Pasternack suggests that even within works that we identify as poems, 'stylistic differences among movements and the disjunctive structure itself work against establishing a subject's voice that would control a poem' (30). That is, not only is Old English poetry often anonymous, but its structure and syntax exhibit a lack of stylistic coherence that prevents or discourages readers from employing an author function, precisely because an author is understood as providing a controlling 'subject's voice' via Foucault's criteria of coherence.

The appeal of Pasternack's line of argument should be obvious, but in her treatment of works like *The Wanderer* and *The Dream of the Rood* as distinct poems, she acknowledges that 'the editors' designations of poems and titles are the result of readings

sensitive to the poetry's visual cues and aural structures' (28). Of course, this observation is an acknowledgment that (even in the perceived absence of coherence granted by a 'subject's voice'), manuscripts do present passages of verse in ways that work to assure their coherence as poems, and it seems probable that sensitive Anglo-Saxon readers would have had as much or more access to such cues as modern editors. It is not so much that Old English inscribed poems do not imply authors as that the mode of their implication is historically situated in ways that may not be familiar to us. To the degree that readers rely upon 'visual cues or aural structures' to grant coherence to a poem in the process of reading, an author function still operates as the locus of that coherence, even in the absence of an author's name. We must also not forget the very fact and physicality of writing: a reader faced with a written or inscribed poem must be aware not only that the act of writing (involving an agent of writing such as a scribe) took place at a moment other than the moment of reading, but (further) that there must have been an initial moment of inscription at some point. In this context, Elizabeth Tyler's recent comment that 'the stability of Old English poetic convention is a striking historical phenomenon which must be accounted for rather than assumed' (7) serves as a valuable intervention. Tyler's identification of scribes who contribute to 'the ongoing composition of the poem' as poets, rather than as readers (6) usefully reassociates an author figure (although perhaps one who is not necessarily understood as a locus of originality) with the production of the text.

As this discussion suggests, the act of reading itself (by which I mean the kind of sensitive, interpretive reading that is engaged in meaning-making, as opposed to the potentially separate act of vocalizing a text) always involves the invocation of an author function on the reader's part, simply as the consequence of the reader's recognition of the distance between text and self: the act of making meaning from a text is a negotiation between the reading or listening Self and the implied Other who is the source of the words on the page. What must occupy our attention is the effort of understanding how the author function relates to the act of meaning-making. Those features of Old English poetry that are identified by Pasternack as 'imply[ing] tradition' or implying traditionality (a general habit of anonymous presentation,

structuration by movements, stylistic polyvocality) are, in manuscripts at least, textual strategies mobilized by both poets and scribes. Likewise, when we see authorial names attached to poetic works, claims of originality (rather than traditionality), or even stylistic monovocality – and we do find all of these in relation to Old English verse – we must recognize these textual features, too, as strategies that must be negotiated by readers. All of these strategies (and more) must be considered as we attempt to conceptualize Anglo-Saxon notions of authorship; that such strategies must, in fact, be negotiated by readers, however, means that we must keep questions of audience in mind as well.

But as my list of the surprisingly numerous named or identified poetic authors also demonstrates, Old English verse also occurs in a wider variety of contexts than those most frequently considered by Anglo-Saxonists, whose focus is often narrowly concentrated on the frequently invoked ‘four poetic manuscripts’ of the Exeter Book, the Vercelli Book, the *Beowulf* (or Nowell) codex, and the Junius manuscript.¹⁰ These four books are commonly described in some detail in literary histories of the period (e.g., Greenfield and Calder, Fulk and Cain), while other manuscripts including verse are essentially dismissed as secondary, although the Paris Psalter’s 5000 lines of verse surely stand as a substantial amount (about 1500 more lines than either the *Beowulf* manuscript or the Vercelli Book has), and *The Meters of Boethius*, totalling almost 1800 lines, should surely not be ignored.¹¹ One might consider in particular a recent and revealing comment made by Jonathan Wilcox, who writes, ‘These four manuscripts account for the vast majority of surviving Old English poetry’ (‘Transmission’ 56). Since Exeter, Junius, Nowell, and Vercelli account for only about 20,000 of the ASPR’s roughly 30,000 lines of verse, Wilcox’s ‘vast majority’ should be understood not as an exaggerated paraphrase of ‘two-thirds’ but rather as an expression of how large the poetry contained in these four books looms in the imagination and understanding of modern readers. Commentators’ focus on the supposedly central four books, however, serves to reinforce a continuing perception that they – and they alone – stand at the heart of the Old English poetic tradition, in part because of perceptions that the works in these books show the closest ties to an archaic Old English oral tradition of poetry.¹² This focus deemphasizes any other verse, to say nothing of hindering the

inclusion of Ælfric's alliterative works, or other examples of late Old English verse, into the canon of Old English poetry in the first place.

The relegation of *The Metrical Psalms* and *The Meters of Boethius* to a kind of secondary status in literary histories, overviews, and other studies betrays a clear bias on the part of the modern audience for Old English verse, a bias that Anglo-Saxon readers are unlikely to have shared; as I shall suggest in [chapter 1](#) below, circumstantial evidence suggests that *The Metrical Psalms* may have been the most widely known and even the most authoritative of surviving Old English poetic texts. Yet the critical position that favours 'oral heritage' as definitive of Old English poetry remains incredibly powerful; Fulk and Cain's comments can again stand as exemplary of the current critical position: 'heroic vocabulary permeates all Old English poetic genres' (27), they write, and 'Even more than alliteration and meter, what distinguishes Old English verse from prose is its distinctive diction' (31). 'Words like *swat* "blood" and *deor* "bold" are not found in prose,' they add, 'presumably because they are archaic words that passed out of everyday use but are preserved in verse because of the traditions they invoke' (31). The conventionality of these ideas can be indicated by comparing the comments of Greenfield and Calder, now over twenty years old: 'Some archaic words evidently acquired poetic status by their perpetuation only in verse: *mece* "sword" and *guð* "battle" are two such words' (125). But it is important to recognize that neither 'swat,' 'deor,' nor 'mece' appears with these senses in either *The Meters of Boethius* or *The Metrical Psalms*; 'guð' is used (but only twice) in *The Meters*. The claims for the ubiquity of heroic vocabulary in Old English verse are probably somewhat overstated, especially in relation to *The Meters* and *The Psalms*.

Implicit in the claims for an inherited heroic vocabulary as ubiquitous in Old English verse is a perspective that understands real Old English poetry to be that which continues to exhibit archaic and formulaic features of the presumed oral heritage: thus, the explicitly literary nature of *The Metrical Psalms*, *The Meters of Boethius*, and the works of Ælfric (which also generally derive from the world of Latin literature and learning) serves to exclude them from the conceptual centre of Old English poetry, where the archaic and the apparently oral or 'oral-derived' is

valorized (and asserted to be definitive) at the expense of anything else.¹³ If a work does not exhibit the ‘heroic vocabulary [that] permeates all Old English poetic genres’ (Fulk and Cain 27), if it does not partake of the ‘heroic conventions’ that inseparably join ‘the form and content of [Old English] verse’ (32), it has been treated as either prose (Ælfric) or prosaic (*The Meters* and *The Metrical Psalms*).

Of course, there is no indication at all that Anglo-Saxon audiences ever understood archaic heroic vocabulary and perspectives to be definitive of Old English verse. Indeed, it seems likely that they did not.¹⁴ The arguments I will make in this book that figures such as Ælfric and Ealdred produced Old English verse run against the grain of current understandings (such as those articulated by Fulk and Cain) precisely because these eleventh-century authors rarely made use of a heroic perspective or an archaic poetic vocabulary (although Ælfric’s use of poetic words has perhaps been downplayed or underestimated; see [chapter 4](#)). The conclusion that these authors did not write verse, however, clearly does not follow; these authors were far indeed from any true oral poetic context, and may even have intentionally distanced themselves from it; to understand their works, we must both broaden our conception of Old English verse (or at least be open to the possibility of such broadening) and understand the nature of poetic production (as it structured and was structured by both audience and author) throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

Two critical moments from contrasting points in the history of Old English verse will serve as examples that can at least outline what is at stake in debates about the nature of authorship and audience in relation to Old English poetry: Bede’s famous story of Cædmon, on the one hand, and the eleventh-century inclusion of two poems by Wulfstan the Homilist into tenth-century *Chronicle* annals on the other. Bede’s story of Cædmon, I will suggest, especially when considered alongside the other datable eighth-century Old English poems, shows an awareness from the very beginning of how anonymous and authorially authorized traditions might clash ideologically, while Wulfstan the Homilist’s *Chronicle* poems show that anonymity might be actively deployed by an author who wished to defer his or her own authority. Even in (or possibly especially in) the case of vernacular poetry,

authorship and ‘the author function’ was complexly and multifariously constructed in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Authorship, Tradition, Audience, and Authority: Considering the Eighth-Century Poems

The famous story of Cædmon, from Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*, is virtually always read as an origin story in which Cædmon becomes the first author or composer of Old English religious verse.¹⁵ The Cædmon story is presented by Bede as a miracle story, but ‘the figure who stands by [Cædmon in his dream] is described,’ as Donoghue has recently reminded us, ‘as merely “someone” (not an angel as is sometimes said)’ (*Old English Literature* 59).¹⁶ Though a miracle seemingly occurs, Bede does not directly attribute it to the figure in Cædmon’s dream. In an important sense, the miraculous transformation that Cædmon undergoes has as much to do with an external shift in audience as with any internal shift: when in the company of feasters and drinkers, Cædmon returns to his own lodgings when the harp approaches in the belief that he cannot sing, but in the company of the dream figure, he can and does sing. Further, when he goes in the morning to the reeve and then to Abbess Hild, he still can sing: the gift of song has carried over from dream to waking life.

Given Bede’s failure or unwillingness to identify the figure in Cædmon’s dream as an angel, that figure takes its importance from its role as enabling audience, rather than from an imagined or implied gift-bestowing divinity. Reading Cædmon’s story alongside Albert Lord’s account of Stjepan Majstorović is illuminating:

He sang his songs according to the company he was in, since he had to please his audience or else expect no reward. Thus when he was with Turks he sang Moslem songs, or his own songs in such a way that the Moslems won the battles. When he was with Serbs, whose company was more congenial to him, he sang their songs. (*Singer* 19)

For Majstorović, the make-up of his audience literally shapes the content of even traditional songs, and as Lord suggests here, it is the combination of singer and audience that generates any particular performance. Cædmon, whose singing is never

motivated by a monetary reward, finds himself simply unable to sing when he is not in a company that is congenial to him. The figure in the dream and (later) Hild and other members of her monastery do make a congenial audience for Cædmon, and he can sing songs for them freely. As much as Bede's story of Cædmon can be understood as recounting the birth of a singer or author, it also describes the birth of an audience, precisely because the audience plays such a crucial role in oral contexts such as the one that Cædmon inhabits.

Thus, when Bede writes that *'alii post illum in gente Anglorum religiosa poemata facere temtabant'* (*HE* iv. 24. 414: after him others among the English people attempted to make religious poems), he is certainly suggesting that Cædmon was the first Old English religious poet.¹⁷ But the converse remains equally plain: there could have been no existing audience for English religious poetry before Cædmon, as such poetry had never been sung. And while the gift of song is clearly divine in Bede's account (*HE* iv. 24. 414, *'diuinitus adiutus gratis canendi donum accepit'*: with the help of the divinity he freely received the gift of singing), the dream figure merely commands Cædmon *'Canta ... principium creaturarum'* (*HE* iv. 24. 416: Sing ... about the beginning of created things). It is a purely temporal command, with no clear hint of any divine power behind it. Later, when Cædmon sings for the abbess and *'multis doctioribus'* (*HE* iv. 24. 416: many of the more learned men), they judge that his singing is a gift from God, but they also hedge their bets by putting him to a test in which he is asked to produce more song, leading to the famous comment that *'doctores suos uicissim auditores sui faciebat'* (*HE* iv. 24. 418: he made his teachers in turn into his audience).

These scenes involving the testing of Cædmon reflect the degree to which there had been no prior audience for Cædmon's kind of singing: the 'more learned men' must gather to judge the source of Cædmon's gift because there was an anxiety that it might derive from a non-divine source, presumably because other English singing in the seventh century was anything but religious (at least from a Christian perspective). Regardless, the two developments are crucially interrelated: Cædmon's passing of the test simultaneously involves both the abbess Hild and the 'more learned men' becoming an audience for Old English verse and Cædmon becoming an author.¹⁸ This interdependence of author

and audience should probably be obvious, given that in a living oral tradition, performer and audience collaborate in the production of any particular song. But such an understanding of Hild and the 'more learned men' must reflect backwards upon Cædmon's dream: the power to sing must not come to Cædmon from the figure in the dream (thus accounting for Bede's failure to describe the figure as angel or other supernatural visitor); rather the figure is an auditor, and (while still divinely granted) Cædmon's new-found ability to sing is ultimately inseparable from his finding of such a congenial audience.¹⁹

It may seem disingenuous to point out here that Cædmon's harp-passing companions at the feast remain anonymous, while Bede is scrupulous about naming Cædmon himself, but the strength and persistence of the apparent association between the oral tradition and anonymous composition demands that we further interrogate the relationship between the name of the author and the nature of the poem in the Cædmon narrative. We might begin by noting that Bede, writing in Latin (and from the world view of a Latin scholar) is careful to attach his own name to the *Historia ecclesiastica* and even appends a detailed list of his own writings to the book (v. 24), in a textbook example of the power of an author's name to lend a book authority. In the world of Latin learning, authorship and authority were already closely associated, as the etymological relationship between the words indicates. Specifically, however, authority has a well defined function in relation to naming within this tradition: attaching an author's name to a work serves to associate the work with the literary, political, cultural, or theological authority of the person so named.²⁰

However, such 'authorial authority' (if such a term can be employed) is not the only form of name-based authority at issue in texts. In the case of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, for example, while Bede's name serves to associate it with his previous works, lending it an instant credibility based upon the reputation those works have given him, the Preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica*, in which he appears to secure the help of King Ceolwulf for the book's publication, serves to grant the force of Ceolwulf's political authority to the work as well, in what we might label as a sort of 'patron authority.' Yet a third type of authority is operative throughout Bede's great work in his extensive quotation of and

reliance upon the works of Gregory the Great and others as named sources. Invoking this sort of ‘source authority’ is an especially frequent and powerful textual strategy in the period, especially in the Latin tradition, although it was much employed by Ælfric as well.²¹ As Bede’s apparent use of authorial, patron, and source authority makes clear, names and authority do textual work on multiple levels, only one of which involves the author’s own name.²²

Crucially, however, all of these sorts of authority differ from modern conceptions of what counts as ‘textual authority,’ which might be expressed in Foucault’s terms as the correctness (if not exactly coherence) implicitly granted by an author’s ‘seal of approval,’ as expressed in modern understandings by an assessment of the degree of closeness of a text to an authorial original. To put it more bluntly, for modern readers of Old English texts, one of the central workings of the author function is to serve as a source for discussions and assessments of textual authority, although this linkage is plainly not at stake in Bede’s story of Cædmon. This modern concern, however, has generated a powerful critical anxiety about the nature of the texts we read, centred around the question of where the ‘author’ who grants coherence to a text can be localized in relation to Old English poetry. Thus, the debates about the editing of Old English texts which clustered around the publication of Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe’s *Visible Song* in 1990 circle around this central issue of textual authority, and it is worth taking a moment to consider how they employ the idea of textual authority, even at the risk of seeming to oversimplify their arguments. On one side of the debate, O’Brien O’Keeffe (*Visible Song*, and ‘Material Text’), Doane (‘Oral/Written Texts’), and Pasternack have suggested in various ways that (for Old English poetry in particular) the scribal reproduction of texts was so active and important that textual authority resided in the actual performance or manuscript, and not in any (hypothetical) authorial version. In contrast, Moffat (‘Scribes’) and Lapidge (‘Emendation’) both suggest that at least sometimes manifest corruption (in the form of grammatical, lexical, or metrical incoherence or inconsistency) in scribally produced texts would have necessarily invalidated those texts’ own textual authority, throwing both Anglo-Saxon readers and modern ones into a position where textual authority must be

lodged elsewhere, in an earlier copy. A ‘corrupt’ text thus implicitly contrasts the (present) scribal copy with what can surely be understood as an earlier (although generally not present and thus, in some sense, hypothetical) ‘authorial’ or ‘authoritative’ copy.

It seems to me important to note that (at least if we confine our thinking to how Anglo-Saxon readers responded to texts) the two positions are not at all incompatible: readers would understand the manuscript before them as authoritative (that is, consistent with the level of value and coherence implied by the author function) unless and until it exhibited some clear problem or inconsistency that would render it non-authoritative, in which case the locus of implied textual authority would shift, implicitly invoking a more distant author figure. Each reader’s (or audience’s) encounter with a manuscript must have involved a negotiation between possibly present or distant authority, with potentially different results in different encounters. But because the author function necessarily operates within the process of reading, questions of textual authority highlight questions of *where* the authority (in the sense of a locus of value or coherence) operated in relationship to a text or performance, not whether or not there was any such authority: this kind of authority seems to be necessary to the act of literary reading, whether we have a named author or not. Obviously, the operation of the specific sort of authority we know as ‘textual authority’ is highly complex, but it does not seem to support the notion that texts could be read without invoking an author function.

To return to the case of Cædmon, however, we must observe that since he himself has no pre-existing literary, political, cultural, or theological authority (he is only a cowherd, after all), Bede’s use of his name works explicitly to place him in an originary position of authority (a point that modern readers, as I have noted above, have been very quick to seize upon).²³ It is no surprise that the Cædmon story has been read as a literary origin so frequently, when even Bede seems to read it that way. But implicit in Bede’s handling of the story, I think, is the tension between the traditionality of Old English poetic composition (in which – in the oral tradition at least – authors may be seen and heard and thus go unnamed within their texts) and the authorizing effect of

naming in relation to authorship in the Latin tradition, where there is implicitly more distance between author and audience.²⁴ What appears to be at stake here are the cultural associations of the two languages, at least at the moment of Bede's writing: Old English as local, and possibly even vocal, on the one hand, and Latin as the language suited to long-distance (and otherwise distanced) written communication on the other. The authorizing effect of authorial naming is obviously useful in the long-distance Latin context, but utterly unnecessary in Old English, if Old English is understood as localized and limited to the reach of the human voice – for exactly the reasons Lord indicated above: the performer of an oral poem is virtually always visible to the audience.

As a result, we see that as Cædmon's verse simultaneously enables and benefits from the establishment of an audience for it, Bede's figuration of Cædmon as a named author and origin pulls the Old English religious verse that Cædmon produces into the world of Latinate culture, a move directly paralleled by Cædmon's own move from the feast to the monastery. Such a reading seems to account for the much-noted fact that Bede includes only a Latin translation of Cædmon's verses in the main body of his text: although Old English religious verse now has an audience, Cædmon's audience is not Bede's.

Bede's interest in Cædmon, in other words, fascinatingly parallels (and no doubt helps to shape) the interest of many modern readers. Bede is interested in Cædmon as author and origin, and the singing feasters, the 'more learned men' who become Cædmon's audience, and even Cædmon's less talented followers in the realm of Old English religious verse all appear anonymously in Bede's text. Cædmon, by contrast, becomes a named source of poetic authority (and the list of his works in *HE* iv. 24 might usefully be compared to the list of Bede's works in *HE* v. 24), even while the Old English version of the *Hymn* was, at best, originally relegated to the margins of Bede's work.

Bede's explicit marginalization of Old English verse, I think, deserves to be compared to the opposite treatment afforded it by Cuthbert, in his famous letter on Bede's death, which includes what has come to be known as *Bede's Death Song*. In Colgrave and Mynors's edition of Cuthbert's *Epistola de obitu Bedae*, we read of Bede's habits in the days before his death:

In nostra quoque lingua, ut erat doctus in nostris carminibus,
dicens de terribili exitu animarum e corpore:

Fore ðæm nedfere nænig wiorðe
ðonc snottora ðon him ðearf siæ
to ymbhycgenne ær his hinionge
hwæt his gastæ godes oððe yfles
æfter deað dæge doemed wiorðe. (HE 580–2)

(Also, in our language, as he was learned in our songs, speaking of the terrible departure of the soul from the body, [he said] ‘Before that necessary journey, none shall be wiser of thought than is needful to him, in thinking, before his leaving, what shall be adjudged to his spirit of good or evil after the day of death.’)²⁵

Here we are only told that, as death approached, Bede was saying or reciting these verses (‘dicens’); Colgrave and Mynors include a note suggesting that only a small group of late manuscripts attribute their composition to Bede himself, concluding that ‘the evidence for Bede’s authorship is by no means strong’ (580-1, note 4). Dobbie, by contrast, had earlier suggested that ‘it will not be amiss to regard the song as the sole extant composition in English verse by the greatest Anglo-Saxon scholar and churchman, the Venerable Bede’ (ASPR VI, cvii). Both comments, of course, appear to take the paradigm of originary authorship as implicit: the question boils down to whether or not Bede is an ‘author’ of these verses, but it is probably more useful to understand Bede here as playing the role of reciter and tradition-bearer: an author for Cuthbert (in Lord’s sense of an oral performer, once more) but not for us, in our sense of originary production.²⁶

But Cuthbert’s treatment of the verses within his Latin text could not differ more from Bede’s, as the Old English text plays a central part in the ongoing narrative, in contrast to Bede’s Latinization of *Cædmon’s Hymn*. Where Bede makes Cædmon’s authorship explicit, while effacing and marginalizing his actual Old English words, Cuthbert leaves the question of originary authorship open but quotes Bede’s words directly. Cuthbert’s comment that Bede was ‘learned in our songs’ (doctus in nostris carmini-bus) can be taken to imply either skill in composing or a more general familiarity with the genre, but without any explicit

comment about Bede's authorship here, it seems best to conclude that Cuthbert implies that Bede is quoting or (re)performing. Interestingly, a reading of *Bede's Death Song* as a proverbial bit of verse finds support in *Maxims II*, where a similar idea is expressed in similar terms:

Metod ana wat
hwyder seo sawul sceal syððan hweorfan,
and ealle þa gastas þe for gode hweorfað
æfter deaðdæge, domes bidað (57b–60)

(The lord alone knows where the soul shall later turn, and all the spirits that will go before God shall await judgment after the death-day.)

Although *Maxims II* is recorded only from the eleventh century, the verbal parallels are striking.²⁷ The case for *Bede's Death Song* as a highly traditional work might be further strengthened by a consideration of *Beowulf* 885, 'æfter deaðdæge dom unlytel' (after the day of death, no little fame [accrued to Sigemund]) where 'dom' refers not to God's judgment, but rather to the purely worldly fame that Sigemund achieved by slaying a dragon.

What these analogues to *Bede's Death Song* from *Beowulf* and *Maxims II* suggest is that we might understand *Bede's Death Song* as indeed belonging to a kind of Cædmonian tradition in which elements from the Germanic heroic tradition (here, the notion of 'dom' expressed in the participle 'doe-med') are reconfigured with newer Christian meanings. Even so, however, Bede's declaiming of this bit of verse operates quite differently from what we might imagine as performances of Cædmon's 'many songs about the terrors of future judgment, the horrors of the pains of hell, and the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom' (de terrore futuri iudicii et horrore poenae gehen-nalis ac dulcedine regni caelestis multa carmin' *HE* iv. 24. 418): *Bede's Death Song* functions (as the *Maxims II* analogue confirms) not as poetic narrative, but as wisdom poetry, a proverbial statement of the human inability to know the future. As such, it is surely also important to read *Bede's Death Song* alongside the two-line poetic proverb now known as *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*. Like *Bede's Death Song*, this poem survives only in the context of an eighth-century Latin letter, this

Oft daedlata domę foręldit
sigisitha gahuem, suuytit thi ana (1-2)

Notably, the poetic quotation itself is presented at a further degree of anonymity, as the letter's writer cites the proverb as a well-known (and thus traditional and, in that sense, unauthored) saying. Further, 'dom' (as in *Beowulf* 885b) seems here to signify only earthly glory or fame, not Christian judgment, although the proverb's concerns with 'dom,' death, and journeys do recall *Bede's Death Song*. As Fred C. Robinson has recently noted, 'what is remarkable about it is the reversion to old Germanic heroic folk wisdom in a context that is purely religious' ('Secular Poetry' 290).

The contextual and content-based similarities of these latter two eighth-century poems deserve our attention: both poems are preserved only in the context of Latin letters, standing as untranslated Old English quotations provided for readers who must know the language; that is, the Latin context indicates that the audience for both poems should be understood as ecclesiastical figures, and thus probably distant in space from the writers of these letters, but ones who (like Bede himself, perhaps) were apparently willing and able to appreciate Old English verse, even when (as in *A Proverb*) lacking in any explicit Christian language or overtones. Further, the proverbial, rather than narrative, content of both poems stands as a reminder to us that narrative is only one of the purposes to which Old English verse was put, and – at least in the eighth century – perhaps not the purpose that led most commonly to its preservation and textual dissemination: as proverbial wisdom expressed in Old English

verse, these bits of poetry appear to mobilize the vocality and immediacy associated with vernacular expression for the audiences of these letters: these poems survive, in part, because they counteract the distancing and formality of Latinity. Of course, it is also worth recalling that proverbial wisdom, precisely because it functions as an expression of widespread and traditional cultural beliefs, is often transmitted anonymously, as is explicit in the case of *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*. The proverbial nature of *Bede's Death Song*, it seems, may help account for Cuthbert's failure to identify Bede (or anyone else) as the author of the passage.

Together, *Bede's Death Song* and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* might be taken to suggest just how ineffective Cædmon's singing was in transforming the conceptual associations that circulated around Old English verse in the eighth century. While Bede took pains to portray Cædmon as a source of originary authority – a named author responsible for a body of work and, indeed, for the entire genre and school of Christian Old English narrative poetry – Bede on his deathbed (like the anonymous author who quotes *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*) seems to value Old English poetry more for the comfort of its traditionality than for its Cædmonian innovativeness. Although they date from later in the eighth century than Bede's *Historia*, *Bede's Death Song* and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* should be seen alongside *Cædmon's Hymn* as equally important eighth-century precursors to the surviving Old English verse tradition: anonymous expressions of traditional wisdom, short non-narrative verse proverbs functioning to console or exhort. These short poems stand as a reminder, too, that despite the undeniable contextual and comparative value of Lord's work in Serbo-Croatia on oral narrative verse, the Old English verse tradition must always have included non-narrative verse genres as well, and contemporary scholars' focus on the narrative tradition, and on the formulaic system that appears to have supported it, may unnecessarily limit our vision of the breadth of poetic expression in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁸

To put it in other terms, *Bede's Death Song* and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* remind us of the importance of genre in relation to questions of authorship, authority, and audience. Indeed, genre is especially important in relation to the question of oral roots or the oral derivation of Old English poetry. Thus John Miles Foley

has reminded us to be careful about differences in genre: 'What must be observed rigorously in every comparative undertaking, however, is the integrity of genre. One simply cannot expect a cogent analysis to come out of a comparison of, for example, riddles and epics' (*Traditional Oral Epic* 3). Recently, however, Foley has addressed the possible 'leakage' between differing genres within an 'ecology of genres' in ways that are especially significant for considerations of Old English poetry ('How Genres Leak' 78). Discussing Homeric, South Slavic, and Old English examples, Foley concludes that 'Old English poetry illustrates the most widespread leakage between and among its traditional verse genres' (102), because the Old English alliterative line does not vary from genre to genre. Thus, although the oral-formulaic method of analysis might be most clearly adapted to narrative poetry, verses or other material from other Old English genres (including proverbs, memorial verses, and so on) could apparently 'leak' across genre boundaries in the Old English tradition with special ease. The poetic resonances shared between *Bede's Death Song*, *Maxims II*, and *Beowulf* 885 may exemplify just this sort of leakage between wisdom poetry and narrative verse. But such an observation attests to the very complexity of the traditions involved and the varied but probably overlapping audiences that the various genres imply.

From another angle, however, it is helpful to observe that, while we could usefully address the agency of the audience in relation to *Cædmon's Hymn*, the passages now known as *Bede's Death Song* and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* seem more fully integrated into the world of literacy, in the sense that the recipients of the Latin letters containing both poems influenced the production of the texts not by their presence but by their absence. As they are preserved, then, we must imagine an audience of readers for both poems – although the authors of these letters apparently stand also as audiences for earlier performances, as is explicit in the case of Cuthbert's listening to Bede. Although brief, these eighth-century examples are one index of how fully we should understand later Old English poetry as participating in a literate milieu of readers and writers or recorders. As we shall see, most of the ways in which I will be able to address questions of audience in the remainder of this book will depend upon thinking carefully about the readers of

Old English poems, and how writers are often, in their turn, readers or listeners.

What my discussion of these three eighth-century poems has attempted to do is to begin to indicate the complexity of the issues that surround authorship, traditionality, and authority in Old English verse, even (or especially) given modern commentators' habitual and conventional assertions of the essential anonymity and orality of the Old English poetic tradition. While it may sometimes seem as if our understanding of the audience of Old English verse is dominated by the two audiences described in Bede's Cædmon story (learned ecclesiastics listening to religious verse on the one hand, and unlettered cowhands presumably listening to heroic verse on the other), in their taste for traditional wisdom poems, Bede, Cuthbert, and the author and recipient of the letter containing *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* remind us that, from the very beginnings of recorded Old English verse, the tradition had both a wider range of uses and genres and a more complex spectrum of audiences.

The Case of Wulfstan: Naming, Anonymity, Poetry, and Formulas in the Eleventh Century

At nearly the opposite end of the Anglo-Saxon period, in the early eleventh century, Wulfstan the Homilist, archbishop of York and advisor to both Æthelred and Cnut, stands as an important eleventh-century reader and composer of Old English verse. His familiarity with Old English verse has long been supposed, but many modern readers seem to have been more intent upon distinguishing Wulfstan's style from verse than assessing his actual debt to the verse tradition.²⁹ But in fact, as I will show, evidence from verbal parallels appears to indicate that Wulfstan must have actually read *Andreas*, one of the surviving classical Old English poems. Likewise, he is usually credited (on the basis of his characteristic style) with the authorship of two poetic passages in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. As one of the most familiar named authors of the Anglo-Saxon period, the case of Wulfstan can usefully stand as a supplement to my discussion of authorship, the author function, and audience in Bede, Cædmon, and the other eighth-century works addressed above.

It is useful to begin with Wulfstan's familiarity with *Andreas*, the evidence for which lies in Wulfstan's phrase 'an ece Godd, waldend 7 wyrhta ealra gesceafta' (one eternal god, ruler and builder of all creation; Bethurum VII, 32-3), a phrase that, as Table I.1 shows, he used repeatedly, although with some variations.³⁰

Three of the thirteen works listed in the table are not generally accepted as authentic Wulfstan compositions (Napier XLII and LVIII and the Bodley 180 prayer), but the other ten are, and it is clear that this particular phrase is a favourite of Wulfstan's. Further, the material from Napier XLII and LVIII is so similar to Wulfstan's phrasing as to likely derive from it (the case of the Bodley 180 prayer, which is also almost certainly post-Wulfstanian, is addressed in [chapter 5](#)).

Table 1.1

Use of 'an ece god' and 'wealdend and wyrta' by Wulfstan and Others

Bethurum VII, 32-3	and 7 wyrhta eaira gesceafta
Bethurum VIIc, 14-15	and 7 wyrhta eaira gesceafta
Bethurum XII, 9-10	and 7 wyrhta eaira gesceafta
Ælfric's <i>CP</i> Prologue	and [and] wyrhta eaira gesceafta
IIA Polite. 1	tyning, wealdend and wyrhta ealra gesceafta
Barnes 106b, 23-4	gesceop heofonas 7 eorðan 7 ealle gesceafta
Barnes 106d, 27-8	æelmihtig, be gesceop heofonas 7 eorðan 7 ealle gesceafta
Napier XLII, 106	god, be gesceop heofenas and eorðan and ealle gesceafta
Napier XLIII, 198	god, wyrhta and wealdend eaira worulda
Bodley 180 Prayer	God, wyrhta 7 wealdend eaira gesceafta
Bodley 180, 6	he is waldend 7 wyrhta ealra gesceafta
Napier LVIII, 301	he is wealdend and wyrhta ealra gesceafta
Ælfric's <i>W</i> 421-2	[and] wyrhta ealra gesceafta
Napier XLII, 308	wyrhta ealra gesceafta,
Napier XXXVIII, 79	wealdend and wyrhtan ealra gesceafta

If we consider only Old English prose, then, this phrase has every appearance of being a signature phrase of Wulfstan's, an exemplification of his idiosyncratic and formulaic style.³¹ But things get much more interesting when we compare this turn of

phrase with the relevant passages from the ASPR, where the closest analogue is found in *Andreas*, preserved now in the Vercelli book:

wealdend ond wyrhta wuldorþrymnies,
an ece god eallra gesceafta (*Andreas* 325-6)

(ruler and builder of heavenly glory, one eternal God of all creation.)

These lines are repeated (with ‘waldend’ for ‘wealdend’) verbatim later in the poem in *Andreas* 702-3, while the second of the two lines appears with only a slight variation in *Andreas* 1717, ‘An is ece god eallra gesceafta.’ Both of the small variations seen in *Andreas* (‘wealdend’/‘waldend’ and ‘an ece’/‘an is ece’), one must note, are also seen in the Wulfstanian passages cited in Table I.1.

Outside of *Andreas*, however, we also find occasional examples of similar phrasing in other poems. As I will discuss further in [chapter 2](#), *Andreas* 326 (or perhaps 703) is apparently quoted or copied without change as line 15 of Wulfsig’s *Metrical Preface to Wærferth’s Translation of Gregory’s Dialogues*. In *Christ and Satan*, we find the following two-line passage, which seems related to the passages in *Andreas*, although with some reversals of the order of elements:

þæt he ana is ealra gesceafta
wyrhta and waldend þurh his wuldres
cræft (*Christ and Satan* 583-4)

(that he alone is builder and ruler of all creation through the power of his glory)

We find in *The Meters of Boethius* a full line forged from elements separated by a line-break in the *Andreas* two-line passage:

waldend and wyrhta weorulde gesceafta (*Meter* 30
14)

(ruler and builder of worldly creation)

Something interesting, it seems clear, is going on here, but the central significance of these passages for our understanding of Wulfstan is that nowhere else, in all of surviving Old English prose or verse, are all three phrases ‘an ece god,’ ‘wealdend ond wyrhta,’ and ‘ealra gesceafta’ closely collocated except in works written by Wulfstan (or borrowed from him) and in *Andreas*. Since formulaic expression in classical Old English verse is most common at the level of the half-line, considerably rarer at the level of the full line, and very unusual indeed in structures larger than the full line, *Andreas*’s re-use of two full lines in sequence (in 325-6 and 702-3) is conspicuously unusual – so much so, I believe, that we should hesitate to hypothesize that any such two-line ‘formula’ was current among now-lost poems. It also seems probable that Wulfstan’s use of three of *Andreas*’s four repeated half-line phrases in close conjunction was not the result of independent composition, although I suppose that that possibility cannot be ruled out entirely. The simplest explanation for the verbal overlap between *Andreas* 325-6 and Wulfstan’s texts is surely a relationship of dependence, either direct or through some intermediary, whether in writing or in speech.

There is, of course, no chronological difficulty with this possibility; whenever we might be inclined to date the composition of *Andreas*, its inclusion in the Vercelli book implies its existence by that book’s date at some point in the second half of the tenth century, and so Wulfstan clearly might have encountered it.³² Nor is it difficult to imagine that an Old English homilist like Wulfstan might have read poems and even incorporated parts of them into his homilies: a similar process of poems influencing homilies had already taken place in Vercelli homilies II and XXI (these and other examples will be discussed further in [chapter 5](#)). And if such contextual support were not enough, additional support is also available, in terms of Wulfstan’s use of other lexical items and his orthography.

On the lexical front, Wulfstan also employs a couple of conspicuously unusual lexical items that are also used in *Andreas*. First, the very rare word ‘wuldorprym,’ used in the very passages in question in *Andreas* 325 and 702, shows up only two other times in Old English, once in Blickling homily 10 and once in Wulfstan’s *Institutes of Polity*, which might be taken as supporting the likelihood that *Andreas* is the proximate source for Wulfstan,

even though here there is clearly at least one other possible source.³³ Because Wulfstan uses the three surrounding half-lines (325a and 326a-b) and uses ‘wuldorprym,’ it is more likely that his source for this word is in *Andreas* than in Blickling homily 10 or that the word was in widespread circulation. Wulfstan may also get the slightly more common (but still rather unusual) word ‘earmscapen’ from *Andreas* (1129a and 1345a); otherwise it appears only in other ASPR poems, in Wulfstan’s works, in Napier XLII (in a passage borrowed directly from Wulfstan) and in Napier XXIX (both times in passages derived from *Judgment Day II*). ‘Earmscapen,’ then, should very probably be added to the list of otherwise strictly poetic compounds also used by Wulfstan (including ‘dægweorc,’ ‘geardagas,’ ‘lifweg,’ ‘mægenstrengðu,’ ‘þeodscaðan,’ ‘wæpen-gewrixl,’ and ‘wudutreow’) recently printed by Don Chapman.³⁴

Further, however, it is especially striking that Wulfstan uses both the ‘wealdend’ and the ‘waldend’ spellings. As recently noted by Richard Dance, the ‘waldend’ spelling might be seen as an Anglian spelling, distinct from the normal late West Saxon spelling ‘wealdend’ (‘Sound, Fury and Signifiers’ 33). Yet the ‘wealdend’ and ‘waldend’ spellings have received special notice in studies of Old English poetry; in the context of Wulfstan’s spellings, it is useful to quote Angelika Lutz’s conclusion at some length:

Scribes who wrote Standard Late West Saxon followed two different spelling conventions for the agent noun *w(e)aldend*, one for poetry [‘waldend’] and one for prose [‘wealdend’]. This spelling distinction was not conditioned by a difference in referential meaning, as Stanley suggested, but by the ‘poetic potential’ of the word. (‘Spellings’ 62)³⁵

If Lutz is correct, the spelling ‘waldend’ (used no fewer than four times by Wulfstan, as Table I.1 shows), may be retained precisely in order to evoke that spelling’s ‘poetic potential,’ rather than as a potential indicator of dialect.

What this discussion of ‘wuldorprym,’ ‘earmscapen,’ and the ‘waldend’ spelling suggests, I believe, is that there is a variety of evidence to support the possibility that Wulfstan’s use of ‘an ece God, waldend 7 wyrhta ealra gesceafta’ derives from Wulfstan’s own compositional concerns, rather than being merely a

borrowing from a prior homilist's (now lost) work, where poeticisms were borrowed directly from a poem (as in Vercelli II and Vercelli XXI, which clearly pre-dated Wulfstan). Rather than hypothesizing a lost intermediary source for Wulfstan, it seems better to conclude that, like the Vercelli II and Vercelli XXI homilists before him (and like others, such as the Napier XXIX homilist who may have come later), Wulfstan was a reader of at least one Old English poem (in this case *Andreas*) and that he had no reluctance about recycling at least a small amount of material from a poetic source into his homilies and other writings.³⁶

Wulfstan and these other homilists, then, stand as some of the clearest examples of Anglo-Saxon readers of Old English verse that have so far been found. But the example of Wulfstan and *Andreas* makes it clear that, even during the Anglo-Saxon period itself, we must distinguish at least two sorts of audience in our thinking: on the one hand, we have the contemporary audience imagined by the author or initial copyist of a poem, and on the other, there are later, non-contemporary readers.³⁷ We might compare this to the situation of the letter containing *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*, which was probably not anonymous to its original recipient but is anonymous to us, precisely because we are a later audience, unanticipated by the author. Similarly, Old English poems more generally might have had such a two-part or two-stage audience. We can label the two sorts of audience as an 'intended audience,' the audience that the poet (or scribe, under some circumstances) has in mind, and an 'unintended audience' made up of later readers who come across a work.³⁸

The difference between these two kinds of audience is crucially important, for the intended audience of a work is structural in relationship to the work itself: the work is shaped by the intended audience and, in turn, helps to shape it. Unintended audiences, by contrast, can only be shaped by the works they encounter: they do not help to shape those works, unless through glossing and rewriting. Wulfstan's lexis and phrasing have been shaped by his reading of *Andreas*, the examples under discussion suggest, but the *Andreas* poet cannot have written with Wulfstan in mind, whether we accept the conventional ninth-century date for the poem (see, e.g., Fulk 64) or simply note once more that the Vercelli Book itself seems to pre-date Wulfstan's career. In relation to Old English poetry, our contemporary reading

practices, it appears, have been dominated by their concern with intended audiences; such an interest is merely one aspect of the modern concern with originary authorship. But as the example of Wulfstan and *Andreas* suggests, there is at least some underappreciated evidence for unintended audiences for Old English verse that survives, and part of my work in this book will attempt to trace several remarkable moments in which unintended readers of Old English verse have been shaped by their reading in ways that have left traces in their own texts.

The example of Wulfstan is important here also because he is widely credited with the authorship of two passages of Old English verse preserved only in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. These poems or poetic passages, found in *Chronicle* annals 959DE and 975D, have been attributed to Wulfstan for almost a century, and the attribution seems secure.³⁹ Yet, within the context of the *Chronicle*, both poems are presented anonymously, and thus they can also serve as a useful touchstone case for exploring just exactly what is at stake in considerations of the authorship of Old English verse, for us and for Anglo-Saxons like Wulfstan and his readers.

For us, the issues surrounding the identification of Wulfstan as author of these two short poems are relatively clear. Attributed to Wulfstan on the basis of distinctive stylistic features (chiefly vocabulary and phrasing), these poems' entry into the *Chronicle* must have served to further one of the most remarkable effects of the *Chronicle*, its standing as a continuing national *Chronicle* that was largely unmarked (at least on the surface) by exactly the sorts of local concerns that could be indicated by an explicitly stated time, place, and person of composition. For us, as twenty-first-century readers, our ability to attach Wulfstan's name to these poems serves to enhance our reading practice, as it allows us to put these works into the context of his life, his career, and his other works. Exactly as Foucault has suggested, in our identification of Wulfstan as author, and in the interpretations we derive from it, we understand Wulfstan's authorship to signify as a guarantor of literary value and of historical, stylistic, and conceptual coherence. Specifically, the assumption of stylistic coherence is precisely what allows the attribution of these poems to Wulfstan in the first place; the attribution, in turn, allows us to assume or employ the other aspects of textualized authorial

coherence. For us, the author's name clearly helps to guide our interpretation.

In broad terms, this aspect of authorial naming was at least sometimes operative in Anglo-Saxon England, as we can recognize by considering the manuscript treatment of Wulfstan's most famous work, the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. Preserved in three substantially different versions in five manuscripts, the text is twice unattributed, headed only 'LARSPELL' (sermon) in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 419 and 'SERMO' (sermon) in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343 (Bethurum 255). In each of the three other manuscripts, however, there is a lengthy rubric, of which the version in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 113 is representative:

SERMO LUPI AD ANGLOS QUANDO DANI MAXIME PERSECUTI
SUNT EOS, QUOD FUIT ANNO MILLESIMO .XIII. AB
INCARNATIONE DOMINI NOSTRI IESU CRISTI. (Bethurum 267)

(Sermon of the Wolf to the English when the Danes persecuted them most, which was in the year 1014 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.)

The conjunction of authorial naming and explicit information about the historical context of the work's composition or delivery here is too insistent to ignore: for this text at least, the presence of Wulfstan's pen-name is at least partly intended to give readers the same sort of contextual guidance to interpretation that our own identification of Wulfstan as author gives to us. We should probably note that the use of 'Lupus' (Wolf) as Wulfstan's pen-name indicates the degree to which the author function, rather than historical localization alone, is being invoked. Specifically, the use of Latin 'Lupus' may serve to distance or dissociate the implied (and named) author from the historical Wulfstan.

Although the dissociation is not (and is probably not intended to be) complete, it evidences an Anglo-Saxon consciousness that the role of author and the person of the composer of a text need not have been entirely congruent. To that degree, 'Lupus' seems also to suggest the contemporary (or nearly contemporary) existence and understanding of an author function as relevant to the act of contextualized reading. That 'Lupus' is used here in the context of

explicit historical contextualization would seem to attest to the sophistication of this rubric's invocation of authorial naming, rather than naivety.

Yet we should take seriously the possibility that the ascription of the *Sermo Lupi* to 'Lupus' may been a later addition, and not part of the original text as presented for its intended audience at all. The copies of the sermon in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 419 and in Bodley 343, of course, lack any authorial ascription, which may suggest that Wulfstan, as originator of the sermon, did not intend a written presentation with his name or pen-name attached – perhaps because he intended that his audiences would hear the sermon from his own lips, rather than read it in a book. Whether Wulfstan himself added the 'Lupus' inscription is far from clear, although its use in London, British Library, Cotton Nero A. i., which Ker describes as 'perhaps ... a handbook for the use of Wulfstan' (*Catalogue* 211), suggests that he endorsed it. It is at least possible, given the *Sermo*'s references to topical events (such as the fighting prowess of the 'flotmen') that the rubric, with its authorial ascription and dating clause, was added precisely in order to help situate a text which had become at least somewhat anachronistic. Certainly, the contextualizing comment included near the beginning of the copy of the *Sermo* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201, served a similar explanatory and contextualizing purpose: 'Pis wæs on Æðelredes cyninges dagum gediht, feower geara fæce ær he forðferde' (Bethurum 261: This was written in the days of King Æthelred, four years' time before he died). Whenever it was added, the 'Lupus' ascription, however, testifies to an understanding that an authorial inscription could provide just this sort of localization and contextualization.

So when Wulfstan allowed his poems to enter the annals of the *Chronicle* without his name attached to them, we should understand that he consciously or actively rejected both the sort of 'authorizing' that Bede used his own name for and the sort of 'contextualizing' that the rubrics to the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* accomplished. Anonymous presentation, in this case, is once again a textual strategy. Indeed, it seems likely that the context of these poems within the *Chronicle* would have actively discouraged Wulfstan from attaching his name to them, as doing so would certainly have pinpointed his own authorial positioning in ways

that would have shaped the poems' interpretation. After all, the attribution of these poems to Wulfstan has shaped our reading of them: these Wulfstanian poems, to the degree that they work to praise Edgar, are understood as partaking of a kind of early eleventh-century nostalgia for Edgar's reign that was apparently shared by Wulfstan and Ælfric both.⁴⁰ But the poems' anonymous presentation in tenth-century annals implies that Wulfstan did not wish them to be read as eleventh-century compositions, but rather as works more or less contemporaneous with Edgar's reign. Indeed, we can be more precise: both poems (placed at the accessions of Edgar and Edward the Martyr, respectively) begin 'On his dagum' (In his days), taking a retrospective look at each reign, implying to readers that they be taken as having been written in or near 975 and 979, respectively (Plummer I, 114 and 121). The placement of these poems in the *Chronicle* makes clear, then, that Wulfstan actively engaged in 'anonymizing' his poems, allowing them to function entirely without the benefits (or hazards) of his name. The very interpretive possibilities structured by the rubrics to the *Sermo ad Anglos* are the ones impeded or foreclosed by the anonymous presentation of Wulfstan's *Chronicle* poems.

It is important to reiterate that Wulfstan's deployment of anonymity in these poems does not necessarily suggest that they do not have an author or an author function; certainly their anonymity does not function this way for us, and it probably did not do so for an Anglo-Saxon audience, either. The very format, manuscript layout, presentation, and even the content of the *Chronicle* attests to its highly constructed textual status: while it has become almost conventional to view the usual layout of Old English poems in long lines across the page as related somehow to their oral heritage, the *Chronicle* (including its poems) must have announced its advanced textuality quite clearly to its readers, even if the *Chronicle* was understood (as it must have been) as a centuries-spanning collaboration. But recognition of the *Chronicle* as a vast collaborative enterprise is precisely the recognition of it as written and authored by multiple persons. Further, like *Brunanburh* and the other *Chronicle* poems that precede them (in the D manuscript), Wulfstan's *Chronicle* poems are *situated*, their explicit historical reference locating them precisely enough to advertise the impossibility that their content

is truly traditional, and thus to announce the fact of their own composition at some particular time and place. Even if an Anglo-Saxon reader could not have identified Wulfstan as these poems' author, an author function must be invoked in the reading of them, precisely because of their manifest non-traditionality.

To clarify how the issues involved in such an understanding relate to conceptions of textual authenticity, it is useful to draw a comparison to a different portion of the *Chronicle*: the Mercian Register. In the B and C Chronicles, the Mercian Register annals are entered *en bloc*, resulting in a repeated chronological sequence with (in the C manuscript) Mercian Register annals 896-924 entered together after *Chronicle* annal 915.⁴¹ Readers encountering the doubled numerical sequence will have (or would have) presumably drawn the obvious conclusion that two originally separate continuations of the *Chronicle* had been entered sequentially, rather than having been collated and integrated.⁴² The apparent differences in focus and content between the Mercian Register annals and the preceding annals for the same years would confirm to readers that separate authors were responsible for the two continuations, because they represent a lack of coherence in historical or geographical positioning. Crucially, however, recognizing separate authors for the two series of annals would not allow the conclusion that one set of annals was authentic, while the other was not. In short, the separate authors here would be assumed to relate to separate historical or geographical contexts, both of which would be understood as fully authentic. In this context, the authenticity of the text is clearly related to the authority of (separate) authors at a previous stage of the *Chronicle's* textual history, rather than in the reader's own construction of the text.⁴³

To return to the problem of Wulfstan's *Chronicle* poems, then, it seems that the manifest stylistic disjunctions between the Wulfstan poems, the prose of the *Chronicle*, and even preceding *Chronicle* poems such as *The Battle of Brunanburh* would have served to multiply the number of author functions implied by the *Chronicle* text; in the context of the *Chronicle*, with its obvious collaborative textual history, stylistic differences surely imply different authors as clearly as the Mercian Register's repetition of annal numbers. In short, at least in the context of the *Chronicle*, even Anglo-Saxon readers would have understood stylistic

disjunctions as operating in relation to an author function as indicating differing authorial positions.

Given that likelihood, it is at least appropriate to ask whether or not Wulfstan's characteristic style would, indeed, have been recognized as Wulfstanian by Anglo-Saxon readers (or listeners, in the case of texts read aloud), even in the absence of any authorial ascription. Despite the question's obvious importance, it is somewhat difficult to attempt an answer. The reuse of fragments of Wulfstan in composite homilies (as in Napier XLII and LVIII above), seems unhelpful here: either later compilers 'borrow' Wulfstan's material in order to borrow his style and the authority of his position, or they fail to recognize his style and simply find his expression convenient enough to recycle. Likewise, if my argument above about Wulfstan's deployment of anonymity in his two *Chronicle* poems has any merit, it would seem to suggest that Wulfstan apparently does not anticipate that readers will recognize his style: he expects his poetic contributions to the *Chronicle* to stand without explicit or implicit ascription to him. Finally, the frequency with which Wulfstan's works (and Ælfric's as well, for that matter) were copied and presented without authorial ascription may well suggest how often copyists (perhaps quite actively indeed) wished to eliminate the contextualizing and historicizing limitations of an authorial ascription: the anonymously presented text is simply less clearly rooted in any known author's time and place. The frequent anonymous presentation of Wulfstanian and Ælfrician texts (for those texts' unintended audiences) may have worked to hinder Anglo-Saxon readers' sense of an authorial identity behind their respective styles; certainly nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars found such anonymous presentation a major hurdle to the establishment of the canons of both authors' works.

As this somewhat lengthy discussion suggests, anonymity was very probably as much a strategy for Wulfstan in his *Chronicle* poems as was his naming or self-naming in relation to other compositions like the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, and as the anonymous presentation of his and others' works were in the hands of later scribes. But crucially, my argument serves also as a reminder of how complex the textual culture we are investigating really was, as well as how complex the issues surrounding naming and anonymity were within it. Clearly, the poetic tradition itself was

not (and could not have been) a monolithic, unchanging force in Anglo-Saxon England, and in the eleventh century, at the latest, we see Wulfstan engaging in the highly traditional strategy of anonymity, even while departing fairly radically from traditional methods of verse composition. To a large degree, my reconsiderations of authorship and audience in the chapters which follow is intended to help historicize the various traditions of Old English verse.

1 Manuscript Audiences and Other Audiences

Bede's story of Cædmon is virtually unique within the body of Old English verse in depicting both a particular act of poetic composition and specifying its original audiences (the dream figure, Cædmon's reeve, Abbess Hild, the 'more learned men'). Nevertheless, it is important to recall that Bede's presentation of Cædmon's work in the body of the *Historia ecclesiastica* by a (lengthy) incipit only (and in Latin translation) serves to remind us that, no matter how clearly Bede sets Cædmon up as an author, his authorial status is more or less explicitly disconnected from any guarantee of textual authority, precisely because Cædmon's own text is not directly present: the *Hymn*'s presence only in the margins of the earliest manuscripts explicitly marks the Old English text as being of secondary importance.¹ Understanding Bede's depiction of Cædmon as author is important in historicizing Anglo-Saxon conceptions of authorship because it exemplifies how radically the concept of a named author could be divorced from notions of textual authority.²

The association between textual authority and named authors is not a purely modern concern, and it was clearly operative in a variety of Anglo-Saxon contexts. In this chapter, I address the issues of author and audience from two additional and complementary perspectives. I begin with a consideration of the problem of textual authority and how the presence of an authorial name associated with an Old English poem was apparently related to the frequency of the poem's reproduction within the manuscript economy of Anglo-Saxon England. Then, by turning to the inscriptional tradition of Old English verse, I consider the 'most immediate context' of a surprising number of little-known Old English poems.³ Drawing on these two investigations, I trace three separate traditions within Old English verse, each of which involves a distinct ideological relationship between a named (or unnamed) author or authorizer and the

legible poetic text. As such, this chapter broadens the discussion about how both authorship and anonymity functioned in the realm of Old English verse, from the earliest records to the latest.

The Evidence of Recopying

One of the central differences between the inscriptional tradition and the manuscript tradition would seem to be the simple fact that one manuscript can be copied to produce another, while each inscriptional text was composed in and for a specific time, place, and situation, and thus was presumably unsuited for recopying and transmission.⁴ This difference is especially important because manuscript texts and inscriptional texts thus are differently implicated in terms of textual authority, by which I mean the fashion in which a text guarantees itself as authentic in relation to its author or author function. The texts upon inscribed objects, precisely because they are unsuited for recopying in a different context, manifest their authenticity more or less directly: thus, even in the case of the Overchurch runic inscription's 'f o t e,' where other inscribed texts read 'fore' (for, in regards to), the manifest 'corruption' of the text does not undermine the text's relation to its material context (at least as long as the stone remained in situ).⁵ This sort of corruption might indeed be read as pointing to an error on the part of the rune-carver (thus invoking the author function at exactly one remove: the author is presumed to have provided the rune-carver with a properly spelled text), but this recourse to an author function merely replicates the naming of the stone's commissioner in the first place.⁶ As we shall see, within the inscriptional tradition, physical objects provide unique contexts for associated poetic texts (often accompanied by authorizing names) in such a fashion as to radically minimize the distance between the text itself and its implied author. Manuscript texts, by contrast, are (in comparison) more highly decontextualized: a similar spelling error in a manuscript may likewise trigger a reader's invocation of an author function, but without any implication at all of the degree of closeness or distance between original and (apparently corrupt) copy.

In terms of helping to contextualize the composition of Old English verse for modern readers, this dynamic is of great

importance because inscribed objects may allow us to date the composition of their associated texts on the basis of non-literary or non-linguistic criteria, raising the possibility that they can be placed more or less securely within an absolute chronology. Poems in manuscripts, which may or may not have been subjected to repeated copying, dialectal or linguistic updating, or simple revision, make dating the original a far more difficult and subjective enterprise.⁷ The importance of such a possibility can be seen in R.D. Fulk's massive *History of Old English Meter*, which provides a fine exemplification of the detailed and sensitive linguistic argumentation that must be brought to bear to even attempt to develop a relative chronology for Old English poetry in the manuscript tradition.

But while this line of argument about the copying of manuscript poems is familiar from discussions and anxieties about the original dates of various poems, the actual evidence for the repeated copying of literary poems is far less extensive than we might like.⁸ If we look, for example, at the 'four poetic manuscripts' so often invoked as standing at the heart of the Old English poetic tradition, we find only the following poetic passages to be multiply attested: the 121 lines of the Exeter Book's *Soul and Body II* correspond closely to 126 lines of *Soul and Body I* in the Vercelli Book; 14 lines of the Vercelli Book's *The Dream of the Rood* have analogues on the Ruthwell cross; *Daniel* (from Junius) and *Azarias* (from Exeter) overlap for 'approximately 150 verses' (Moffat, 'Scribes' 814; about 75 lines); the 9 lines of *Riddle 30a* are repeated in *Riddle 30b*, and a dozen lines from *Riddle 35* are repeated in *The Leiden Riddle*. These cases of close correspondence total only 231 lines, out of the total of about 20,000 lines preserved in these four books.

In comparison, looking only at the so-called *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, collected in the sixth volume of the ASPR, we find nearly 400 additional lines that are attested from at least two manuscripts, and 159 that appear in at least three, even if we exclude both *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Bede's Death Song*, both poems whose preservation is clearly exceptional.⁹ The 167 lines from *The Metrical Psalms* that also appear in the Eadwine Psalter (as well as the 65 lines from the surviving *Metrical Psalms* preserved in the Benedictine office in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121) only increase these numbers.¹⁰ If we go beyond the APSR, late

Old English poems from the *Chronicle* excluded from the ASPR (959DE, 975DE, 979DE, the newly recognized 1003CDE,¹¹ 1011CDE; about 68 lines total in these *Chronicle* poems) provide even more evidence of multiple copying. And, of course, thousands of lines of Ælfric's rhythmical compositions appear in three or more manuscripts.¹² The very poems *not* found in the 'four poetic manuscripts' are far more likely to be multiply attested.

The case of *The Metrical Psalms* is especially revealing. As it happens, the fragments of *The Psalms* found in the Benedictine Office in Junius 121 include no overlap with the verse psalms from the Eadwine Psalter, or we would have another example of triply occurring verse. The use of the metrical version of the psalms in three contexts (to complete the incomplete prose translation in the Paris Psalter, for the Benedictine Office in Junius 121, and to fill in an apparent gap in the Eadwine gloss) suggests that *The Metrical Psalms* were, indeed, felt to be highly authoritative, while the quotation of three lines from *The Metrical Psalms* in *The Menologium* (discussed in [chapter 3](#) below) is the clearest example of literary quotation in Old English poetry. The probable date of the metrical translation (and at least one of its uses) may indicate that *The Metrical Psalms* was produced during the tenth-century Benedictine Reform, and might therefore have been associated with a great deal of textual and cultural authority.¹³ But the reuse or citation of *The Metrical Psalms* in four separate contexts would seem to suggest that this work was widely known and felt to be authoritative. From an Anglo-Saxon perspective the psalms in *The Metrical Psalms* were perhaps the most authoritative of all surviving Old English poetry, even though they do not survive in a complete manuscript in their own right.

It is useful to put the data about multiple copies of Old English poems in slightly different terms, however: ASPR poems attested in the largest number of copies include *Bede's Death Song* (35 manuscripts); *Cædmon's Hymn* (21 manuscripts); *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* (4 manuscripts); *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (4 manuscripts); *The Coronation of Edgar* and *The Death of Edgar* (3 manuscripts); and *The Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care* (2 manuscripts). Poems not edited in the ASPR but recorded multiply include

Wulfstan's *Chronicle* poem from annal 959DE (2 manuscripts); and a large number of Ælfric's rhythmical works (up to 9 manuscripts). Two features of this list clearly demand our attention: on the one hand, the named authors Bede, Cædmon, Alfred, Wulfstan, and Ælfric appear here with notable prominence, and on the other, all of the items in the list belong to texts where 'publication' (in the sense of the production of multiple manuscript copies) appears to have been anticipated.

The appearance of the named or recognized authors Bede, Cædmon, Alfred, Ælfric, and Wulfstan deserves additional comment. The *Chronicle* poems (including Wulfstan's) are anonymously presented, of course, but they are likely to owe their multiple attestations to the authority generated by the *Chronicle* itself, possibly including its apparent or perceived Alfredian origin.¹⁴ To put the prominence of these names more bluntly, all of the poetic works from the ASPR to survive to the present in three or more copies (and more, non-ASPR poems, if we include Ælfric) can be directly or indirectly associated with the authorship or authority of one of these five named figures. Modern scholars' vision of Old English poetry as largely anonymous, it seems, troublingly underestimates the power and function of named poetic authorship during the period.

The evidence that publication was envisioned for these works is equally powerful. Certainly Bede, Alfred (perhaps especially in relation to *The Pastoral Care*), and Ælfric all appear to have anticipated that their works would be produced and reproduced in multiple copies right from the beginning. Alfred's prose preface to *The Pastoral Care*, of course, describes his plan to send copies of the book to each of his bishops, and Ælfric's various prefatorial comments clearly anticipate future scribes.¹⁵ And although Bede addresses his preface to King Ceolwulf (as if to an audience of one), he also describes the *Historia* as having already been 'published' (Bede uses the first-person verb 'edideram' – *HE*, Preface 2) and anticipates that Ceolwulf (through his scribes) will make even more copies (sending the book to transcribers: 'ad transcribendum' – *HE*, Preface 2). Shared by Bede, Alfred, and Ælfric, this pattern of authorial naming that accompanies explicit publication and dissemination is too regular to ignore, and even though these examples are not exclusively concerned with poetry, it seems clear that Alfred and Ælfric, at least, would have had no

trouble including Old English poems within such a conceptual system.

It is imperative, I think, to see that these two circumstances (authorial naming and anticipated publication) are connected. The expectation of publication and multiple copying, of course, should be understood as an author's or compiler's perception of his or her audience as multiple and distant (in space or time) rather than singular and local. This aspect of a structuring, distant audience appears to be clearly connected to the urge to attach an authorial name to a work (regardless of whether in Latin or Old English, poetry or prose) in order to provide contextualizing information about the work or to control its interpretation and use. Indeed, Cuthbert's inclusion of his own name alongside Bede's in the *Epistola de obitu Bedae* serves to contextualize that letter much as Wulfstan's 'Lupi' did in the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, discussed in the introduction above. The names of Alfred and Ælfric serve to both contextualize and assert control, at least to the extent that the names continue to be attached to works across multiple copies; in that sense, the functions of contextualizing and controlling that the authorial names serve are two sides of a single coin.¹⁶ The contextualizing power of a recognizable and historically positioned authorial name, it seems clear, serves to control the range of meanings of a text, and the recognition of distant audiences, for these authors, seems to have prompted the inclusion of authorial names in an attempt to assert just that sort of interpretive contextualization and control.

It is important to state clearly that what is at stake in this discussion is the identification of two separate strands of Old English poetic activity: in one strand, authors' names are attached to works to contextualize or control interpretation, and the purpose for such authorial naming appears to relate to the anticipation of publication and the multiple and distant audiences thus envisioned. We can label these poems according to their audience as the 'distant audience' group. But in the alternative strand of poetic activity, authorial names were not invoked, and – relatedly – multiple copies were rarely produced, suggesting that the authors of these works could remain textually anonymous, precisely because the intended audience of these works was comparatively local and known; these poems and compilations

appear to have a ‘local audience.’

We should note how this logic affects our understanding of the Cynewulfian poems *Elene*, *Christ II*, *Juliana*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*. As noted above, Cynewulf is well recognized by modern commentators as a ‘named author’ second only to Cædmon. But Cynewulf’s purpose in including his ‘signature’ (as the runic passages are frequently described) seems very different from Bede’s, Alfred’s, and Ælfric’s purposes. After the runic passage in *Juliana*, for example, we read:

Bidde ic monna gehwone
gumena cynnes, þe þis gied wræce,
þæt he me neodful bi noman minum
gemyne modig, ond meotud bidde
þæt me heofona helm helpe gefremme (718b-22)

(I pray to every man of the race of men who delivers this poem, that he will generously remember me, a needful one, by my name and pray the Lord that the Protector of the heavens might grant me aid.)

Cynewulf’s purpose for including his name, it seems, is not to generate authority for the poem, but rather to focus readers’ prayers upon him.¹⁷ It is an important reminder that the explicit naming of an author is not necessarily designed to grant textual authority to a work, but as such, it serves to reinforce the strength of the connection between authorial names and cultural or textual authority in the cases of Bede, Alfred, Ælfric, and the *Chronicle*. It is possible, of course, that at least some Anglo-Saxon readers might have recognized the embodied historical figure who is apparently being referenced by the name ‘Cynewulf,’ even though the reference is opaque to modern readers. If so, such readers would presumably have attached that figure’s political, cultural, or scholarly prominence to the Cynewulfian poems in a fashion similar to the way Bede’s, Alfred’s, and Ælfric’s names authorized their texts. Our inability to make the link does not necessarily mean that no Anglo-Saxons could do so, although it seems to be the case that nothing in the Cynewulfian poems depends upon a reader’s recognition of Cynewulf as an authorizing figure. In that sense, Cynewulf’s name does not seem at all closely connected to the author function that enables a

reading of the works.

Yet Cynewulf's request for prayers appears in its own way to anticipate a distant audience, and it is that distant audience, I believe, that prompts the inclusion of Cynewulf's name in all four poems. Cynewulf's signature passages, then, are crucial for seeing that the issue of naming is centrally connected to the author's perception of a distant audience, rather than to either notions of textual authority or anticipated publication. After all, when we consider the transmission history of Cynewulf's works (each singly attested and occurring only within the 'four poetic manuscripts'), we see that they apparently share their textual history primarily with poems understood to have a 'local' audience, where naming was unrequired, and indeed, it is Cynewulf's self-naming within the poems that operated in each case; even Cynewulf's poems do not have an externally attached authorial name. The case of Cynewulf is thus especially interesting for the way his works straddle the boundary between poems which anticipate distant audiences on the one hand or local audiences on the other.

It should probably also be remembered here that the poems associated with Bede, with the *Chronicle*, and with *The Pastoral Care* are all associated with (and in some sense subordinate to) longer works of Latin or Old English prose, and that both the second series of the *Catholic Homilies* and the *Lives of Saints* also feature more or less extensive passages of non-rhythmical prose alongside the Ælfrician verse. Indeed, the virtually exclusive focus on Old English verse seen in the Exeter and Junius books is very unusual, as all other manuscripts that feature Old English verse include other sorts of text as well. Even so, we should probably note the degree to which the works of the authors we have identified, dating respectively from the eighth century, the end of the ninth, and the end of the tenth, appear to exhibit both increasing quantities and proportions of Old English verse: while *Bede's Death Song* and *Cædmon's Hymn* together total only fourteen lines, the poetic output attributed to Alfred was noticeably larger (especially if we include *The Meters of Boethius*, although they remain subordinate to the prose portions of that text), and Ælfric was by far the most prolific author of the entire period, with his metrical works making up a major (and increasing) portion of his output. If Bede's story of Cædmon

implies the establishment of a tradition of Old English verse by named, authoritative authors, Alfred and Ælfric are the most prominent later members of that tradition, and the tradition of 'local audience' verse, in some ways, stands almost as a countertradition, less frequently copied and less well attested in the manuscripts – especially in comparison with the extraordinarily wide dissemination and enduring popularity of Ælfric's works.

It is important, perhaps, to summarize the implications of this line of argument: the general association of anonymously presented verse (as exemplified and concentrated in the 'four poetic manuscripts') with singly attested poems appears to indicate that the most familiar Old English poems were generally not expected to be published and recopied in the same way that Bede's, Alfred's, and Ælfric's works were. The imagined audience for such poems, apparently, was not especially widespread; the poems that modern scholars tend to value most highly (e.g., *Beowulf*, *Judith*, *Elene*, *Andreas*, *Exodus*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Wife's Lament*) were presumably copied for a local, perhaps even specialized audience. Even the authors and scribes of these books and poems, apparently, may never have felt that they belonged among the books 'most necessary for all men to know.'¹⁸

The audience for the poems in the 'four poetic manuscripts,' then, must have been a localized audience, or a series of them, if we consider both authors' and compilers' intended audiences. These books (and any ancestors they may have had) were probably not written to serve as exemplars for future copies, but rather to be read by a specific and local readership, one that was expected to appreciate Old English verse for reasons other than for its authorial innovativeness or its derivation from an authoritative source. Such a conclusion about the audience of these books not only accounts for the infrequency with which the poems in them survive in multiple copies, but it may also explain why we so rarely see clear-cut examples of literary borrowing or quoting in classical Old English poetry. After all, a poet who read one of these manuscripts might well have felt that no audience existed that could appreciate any such reference or quotation, because these poems were not, in fact, widely distributed. In other words, they were simply not authoritative, in that familiar

sense of having a recognizable cultural (rather than merely local) presence. When Wulfstan borrows three half-lines from *Andreas*, he appears to do so in order to lend his works a generalized poetic flavour or effect; he probably does not expect that his readers will hear a specific echo of *Andreas* in particular, although the rarity of the phrases he borrows allows us to trace their source.¹⁹

The authority (again understood in terms of cultural prominence) that both led to and resulted from the widespread publication of Alfred's poems and the *Chronicle*, may have important consequences for our understanding and appreciation of poetic developments in the tenth century. The transition from the relatively classical verse of *Brunanburh* to the late Old English verse of the *Chronicle*'s later tenth-century annals (such as the poems in 975DE and 979DE, both of which were excluded from the APSR) must have been powerfully supported by the cultural authority behind the *Chronicle*. One reason why an author like Ælfric might have chosen to write late Old English verse rather than the classical verse used in *The Battle of Maldon* might have been his explicit desire to write as an author and to publish his works. In the late tenth century, the direction taken by the poems of the *Chronicle* may have made the decision for him, and even though the collections of classical verse in the 'four poetic manuscripts' were roughly contemporary, they simply did not carry the same kind of authoritative power.²⁰

The Inscriptional Tradition of Old English Verse

The audiences implied by the manuscript record, however, are only part of the story. Although not much inscriptional verse survives from Anglo-Saxon England when counted by lines, the number of non-manuscript objects with inscribed verses (counted here at seventeen) would probably come as a surprise to most students of Old English literature, as only three inscriptional poems can be found in the APSR, namely those poems found on the Ruthwell cross, the Franks casket, and the Brussels cross.²¹ Moreover, these most familiar inscriptional poems are also the least typical of the surviving inscriptional verse texts, and given that the number of separate manuscripts represented in the APSR appears to be only about fifty, the number of surviving objects

with verse inscriptions represents a very significant fraction of the surviving contexts for written Old English verse. To the degree that the inscriptional tradition can convey valuable information about the authorship, audiences, and contexts of Old English verse, the selection of inscriptional poems found in the ASPR has unfortunately hindered scholars' understanding of that tradition.

Chronologically, the number of lines of verse from the inscriptional tradition that can be reliably attributed to the eighth century (or early ninth: the dating of inscribed stones is, in practice, no more precise than the palaeographic dating of manuscripts) compares well with the sixteen eighth-century lines from the manuscript tradition (*Cædmon's Hymn*, *Bede's Death Song*, and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*). Not only are there five lines of verse on the Franks casket, but at least fourteen additional (often fragmentary) lines of verse appear on ten memorial stones. Indeed, the relative stability of the tradition of memorial verse in this period aids in the reconstruction of the most fragmentary examples, but this stability and consistency is equally important for indicating that these texts functioned within a cultural context that was anything but ephemeral and inconsequential. These memorial stones attest to a relatively enduring audience and cultural function for Old English verse that operated independently of Anglo-Saxon manuscript culture; the early date of many of these stones (in comparison to the dates of most surviving poetic manuscripts) gives these brief verses a real importance in developing our understanding of the cultural functions of Old English verse.

Perhaps the best introduction to the inscriptional memorial verses is through a consideration of the four Thornhill stones, three of which feature runic inscriptions, and one of which uses roman capitals. The longest of these inscriptions, Thornhill (runic) III, has been read as verse as follows:

+ j i l s u i þ : a r æ r d e : æ f t [.] | b e r h t s u i þ e .
b e k u n | o n b e r g i g e b i d d a þ | þ æ r : s a u l e

(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 141)

(Gilswith raised up a monument for Berhtswith on the burial site; pray for that soul.)²²

As this example shows, such memorial verses are very much tied

to a place and an occasion, often (as here) by the use of personal names for both the commissioner of the monument and the person being memorialized, in this case the two women Gilswith and Berhtswith. A surprising number and variety of such stones survives, as the following quick survey will show.

Roughly contemporary are the Thornhill (runic) I and Thornhill (runic) II, stones. The first of these is reconstructed by Page as:

[+ [.] þ e l b e | [.]: s e t t <e> æ f t e | r e þ e l w i n i
(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 141)

(Ethelberht set [this up] for Ethelwine),

while the second has an identical structure with different names:

+ e a d r e d | * s e t e æ f t e | e a t e i n n e
(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 141)

(Eadred set [this up] for Eadthegn.)²³

The Latin-letter stone which was also found in Thornhill (Okasha no. 116) appears to have a closely related text, although very fragmentary. Relineating Okasha's transcription along the lines of the Thornhill (runic) III poem would give:

[.] A[E]F[T]| [. .]OSBER [.....]
BEC | [.....] (adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List*
118)

(...[set up] a monument for Osber...)²⁴

Intriguingly, the photograph of Thornhill (roman) at the end of Okasha's book appears to show fragments of three further letters, presumably to be read 'BER,' which would echo Thornhill (runic) III's 'becun on bergi' quite closely.²⁵ Here we have a text so fragmented that it is impossible to be certain if it is truly verse, but the similarities to the runic Thornhill stones are so suggestive that it seems important to include this text here.

A similar bit of memorial verse can be seen on the Dewsbury I stone, also from West Yorkshire (Okasha no. 30). This stone, a

portion of a small cross-shaft, is apparently contemporary with the Thornhill monuments.²⁶ Although damaged, most of the remaining text is relatively easy to read, yielding a reconstructed reading like:

RHTAE
BE | CUN A[E]FT | ER BEOR | NAE GIBI | DDAD D [A]ER SA
| ULE

(adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List* 66)

(... [work]ed a monument for [a] son; pray for that soul.)

The half-line, ‘becun aefter beornae’ is, as it turns out, also closely paralleled in the runic poetic Great Urswick inscription from Cumbria:

+ t u n w i n i s e t æ | æ f t e r t o r o i | t r e d æ
b e k u | n æ f t e r h i s b | æ u r n æ g e b i d æ s þ e | r s |
a u | l æ

(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 150)

(Tunwine raised up a monument for Torhtred, for his son; pray for that soul.)²⁷

In a similar fashion, the Falstone stone was set up in honor of an uncle, with the text appearing uniquely in both runes and Latin letters. Both inscriptions are fragmentary, but Page combines readings from both to give the sense of the text:

Eota[.] æftær Hroethberhtæ
becun æftær eomæ gebiddæd þer saule

(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 142)

(... a monument for Hroethberht, for his uncle; pray for that soul.)²⁸

A somewhat different text appears on the runic Overchurch (Cheshire) stone, which is probably to be read as:

[b] i f o l c æ a r æ r d o n b e c [.] | [g i b] i d d a þ f
o < r > e æ þ e l m u n [.]

(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 142)

(The surrounding people raised a monument; pray for Æthelmund.)²⁹

Here (if ‘[b]ifolcæ’ is correct), the stone seems to be set up by virtually the entire community. Although fragmentary, two additional Latin-letter texts appear to fit in with this tradition of memorial stones, both dated by okasha to the eighth or ninth century. The first is from Carlisle, Cumberland, and Okasha suggests a reconstruction as follows:

+ SIG[... SE]TTE DIS | [.....] | AEF | [TER S.] | ITBE |
[RH..]

(adapted from okasha, *Hand-List* 61)

(Sige[...] set this [monument up] for S[w]itberht.)³⁰

Carlisle’s text, of course, seems very close to the runic Thornhill I and II inscriptions. Even more fragmentary is the text from Wycliffe, Yorkshire, which okasha interprets ‘by comparison with OE memorial texts’ (*Hand-List* 130). Relineated, okasha gives a text like this:

[.]BA[.A] | [...] | [. . .]FTE | [R:] B[ER]E | HTV[IN]I:
BECUN[:] | [AE]FTE[R . .] (adapted from Okasha,
Hand-List 130)

(Bada [set this up] for Berhtwine, a monument for ...) ³¹

Occasionally, other inscribed stones seem to use similar diction (e.g., Yarm, Yorkshire, or the runic Bewcastle cross), but with less certainty that any poetic form is intended.³² Even so, however, the ten stones so far discussed certainly stand as a remarkable grouping.

Taken together, these ten stones – almost all dating from the eighth to ninth centuries, and generally from the North – Yorkshire, Northumbria, Cumbria, Cheshire – attest to what can only be called a tradition of such memorial stones. The use of both runes and Latin letters within this tradition is certainly a remarkable feature, and one which may give us crucial information about the distribution and functioning of literacy in this time and place, but these stones equally give us a valuable picture of one purpose to which Old English verse was traditionally put around the turn of the ninth century.³³ Specifically, Old English verse was used within this tradition to memorialize the dead (often with a request to pray for their

souls), and to identify a commissioner for the stone and its inscription, a mourner who was often a relative of the deceased.³⁴

Given the highly formulaic content of these inscriptions, we might hesitate to identify the commissioners of these inscriptions with their 'authors,' but it is nevertheless important to recognize the degree to which this tradition functions by figuring the commissioners as originators of these particular verse texts. That is, part of the very formulaic content of this tradition involves the naming of the commissioners and the explicit association of those named figures with the sentiments expressed in the texts, whether mourning the dead or requesting the reader's prayers. These commissioners clearly authorize the texts, in the sense of approving them for public presentation. Importantly, we must also attend to the fact that the formulas used on these stones are clearly literate formulas, ones unlikely to have been a part of the oral-formulaic system employed by truly oral poets. From the end of the eighth century at least, this tradition of verse expression was clearly well integrated into a literate environment.

Because of the insistency with which the commissioners of these texts were named, the audiences of these inscriptional poems (whether they accessed the texts by actually construing them or via the functioning of a textual community) necessarily understood each text as functioning in relation to a particular individual, another member of the local community.³⁵ As if it were the exception to prove the rule, the case of the Overchurch stone (if the reading of '[b]ifolcæ' is correct in the inscription's 'commissioner' position) presents us with a remarkable example where the community as a whole is identified as commissioning and authorizing the text. But even in the case of Overchurch, the 'surrounding folk' do still authorize the content of the text, confirming such authorization as the relevant aspect of these texts' author function.

While the specific formulas from this tradition of poetically inscribed memorial stones do not seem to have spread much beyond the geographical area defined by the preceding examples, the association of inscriptional verse with the names of authorizing commissioners was itself enduring, surviving in a surprising range of other contexts. Indeed, the use of names in verse inscriptions seems to have been a Germanic inheritance, going back at least to the Gallehus horn's runic inscription,

perhaps to be dated as early as the beginning of the fifth century. The Gallehus horn is briefly described by Page, who transcribes its text as:

ek hlewagastiR: holtijaR: horna: tawido (adapted from Page, *Runes* 29)

(I, Hlewagastir, son of Holti, made the horn; Page's translation.)³⁶

Anglo-Saxon examples outside of the tradition of memorial stones also exist. We can attribute to the ninth century, for example, the Lancashire ring and its associated poetic text, written in a curious combination of runes and Latin letters:

+ æDRED MEC AH EAnRED MEC agROf

(adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List* 89)

(Ædred owns me; Eanred engraved me.)³⁷

Here we have not a commissioner and memorialized relative, but owner and artisan (or possibly only commissioner). In contrast, the prose text that accompanies the verses on the Brussels cross (dating from the tenth or eleventh century) explicitly gives the names of the cross's commissioners and a memorialized relative:

þas rode het Æplmær wyrican and Aðelwold hys beropor
Criste to lofe for Ælfrices saule hyra
beropor. (Dobbie, *ASPR* VI, 115)

(Æplmær and Aðelwold his brother ordered this cross to be made in praise of Christ and for the soul of Ælfric their brother.)³⁸

While the Brussels cross does not explicitly ask for prayers, it presumably functions much like the inscribed stones from the earlier tradition. Near the end of the eleventh century, an inscribed stone at Lanteglos, Cornwall, has a text that Okasha reconstructs as

+ ÆLSEL[. G]ENE[RE.] | [.]O[H]TE ÞYS[N]E [S]YB[.TE.] |
FOR ÆLWYNES S[.UL ..]ORHE[.] | [.EL]

(adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List* 91)

(Ælself and Genereth made this peace-place for the soul of
Ælwyn and for themselves.)³⁹

Previously unidentified as verse, the Lanteglos inscription nevertheless appears metrically to fit into the late Old English verse tradition, and the probable use of s-alliteration in both lines makes the identification especially likely. Found at the opposite end of the Anglo-Saxon landscape from the earlier examples, Lanteglos may attest to the surprising endurance of the tradition of Old English inscriptional verse, or it may simply be a more idiosyncratic production. A final inscriptional poem (also late Old English verse) appears on the Bridekirk font (Cumbria/Cumberland), apparently dating from the twelfth century. It is inscribed with a curious mixture of Old English characters and Scandinavian runes:

+ rikarþ: he: me: iwr[o] kte: 7: to: þis: me:rÐ: 3er::
me: brokte.**

(adapted from Page, *Introduction* 208)

(Rikarþ, he made me, and Ger[.] brought me to this
splendour.)⁴⁰

Here, no request is made for prayers, but it is, perhaps, implicit once more.

What these later examples suggest is that, despite the clustering of early examples in the north, the association between inscriptional verse, artisans or commissioners, and spiritual benefit (for oneself or one's loved ones) was perhaps much more widespread in Anglo-Saxon England than the scattered remains that survive might indicate; apparently related examples in silver (on the Brussels cross) and gold (the Lancashire ring) remind us that such a tradition may have flourished on portable or personal items that no longer survive. Support for such a possibility, in fact, comes from a different and even surprising source: the manuscript record, where at least three surviving poetic texts appear to fall into precisely this tradition, fascinating examples of the sort of 'leaking' of genres discussed by John Miles Foley.⁴¹

The earliest of the three manuscript poems dates from the tenth century, and accompanies Farman's gloss to the Macregol (or Rushworth) Gospels (Oxford, Bodleian Auct D. 2. 19).⁴² The passage in question is the scribe Owun's colophon to the gloss:

Ðe min bruche gibidde fore Owun

ðe ðas boc gloesde.

Færmen ðæm preoste æt Harawuda

hæfe nu boc awritne; bruca mið willa,

symle mið soðum gileofa. Sibb is eghwæm leofost.

(adapted from Ker, *Catalogue* 352)

(To you [who] makes use of me, pray for Owun, who glossed this book. Farman the priest at Harawuda has now written the book; enjoy with goodwill, always with true belief. Peace is dearest to all.)⁴³

While not without some minor metrical peculiarities, the verse structure seems relatively clear, and the second half-line ‘gebidde fore Owun’ is far more closely paralleled on the Overchurch stone (and, indeed, in other inscriptions) than anywhere in the manuscript verse tradition.⁴⁴ Here Owun asks for prayers on his own account (rather than for a relative), but he does so by using a formula that does not occur in the classical manuscript tradition. The use of the singular imperative verb (‘gebidde,’ matching the second person singular ‘Ðe’) stands in contrast to the regular use of the plural imperative in the inscriptional texts above. Owun, it seems, writing in a book, imagines an audience composed of a single reader, while the inscribed stones apparently imagine a broader, public audience. This difference aside, however, Owun’s colophon suggests his apparent familiarity with the inscriptional tradition in the tenth century.

A second colophon text which appears to have affinities to the inscriptional tradition is found in London, British Library, Additional 40,000:

Ælfric *ond* Wulfwine, Eadgife goldsmiðes,

geafen to broþerrædenne twegen orn-weghenes goldes

þæt is on þis ilce boc her foruten gewired.

(adapted from Ker, *Catalogue* 163)

(Ælfric and Wulfwine, Eadgifu’s goldsmiths, gave in brotherhood two *ora*-weights of gold, which is here wired about on this very book.)⁴⁵

As we would expect from the eleventh-century date, this poem is late Old English verse, not classical, but although it shows alliteration in each line, its metrical structure seems to have gone unrecognized.

A third scribal colophonic inscription has only recently been read. Occurring at the end of a brief discussion of cryptic writing on fol. 16r of London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius E. xviii, there appears a cryptogram which Phillip Pulsiano has decoded as:

Ælfuwine me uurat. ræde ðu ðe cenne (adapted
from Pulsiano 99)
(Ælfwine wrote me; may you read it who can.)

Ker dates the text to the middle eleventh century (*Catalogue* 298), but Pulsiano tentatively suggests a date ‘in c. 1031 or shortly thereafter’ (100), on the basis of identifying the Ælfwine of the cryptogram with the abbot of the New Minster Winchester, from 1031 to 1057. Although Pulsiano does not identify Ælfwine’s colophon as verse, its use of double alliteration (on ‘w’) in the a-line is completely appropriate for eleventh-century late Old English verse.

Like the memorial poems from the inscriptional tradition, all three of these colophonic poems identify their authors or commissioners by name, a practice which is generally rare in surviving manuscript verse (with the exception of Cynewulf’s runic ‘signatures,’ the Alfredian colophonic poems, and a few of Ælfric’s compositions).⁴⁶ Specifically, Owun, Ælfric, Wulfwine, and Ælfwine are presented as artisans (whether scribes or goldsmiths) signing their works, just as Eanred seems to have signed the Lancashire Ring, Rikarp the Bridekirk font, and Drahmal the Brussels cross (with the non-poetic, first-person ‘Drahmal me worhte’).⁴⁷ Even though they appear in manuscripts, then, these three ‘colophonic’ poems might be better understood as ‘manuscript inscriptions,’ in the sense that they operate more like inscriptional texts (and inscriptional verse in particular) than like most manuscripts texts. Likewise, it might be worthwhile to view Cynewulf’s self-naming in the context of a prayer request as essentially colophonic as well, and thus potentially linked to the

inscriptional tradition in that sense, as well as by his use of runes.

The Anglo-Saxon examples of artisanal verse ‘signatures’ (gathered from books and other objects) suggest that such inscriptions remained a traditional venue for verse expression at least up to, and even into, the twelfth century, as well as stretching far back into the Germanic past, as evidenced by the Gallehus horn. Simultaneously, though, Anglo-Saxon England also exhibited a seemingly vibrant tradition of poetic memorial inscriptions, especially well represented from around the turn of the ninth century in the North, but with enough scattered later examples to suggest that the tradition did not die out at that time and place. The colophonic manuscript poems discussed here, intriguingly, seem to partake of aspects of both the Old English memorial and artisanal inscriptional verse traditions.

Finally, it is also important to note that one of the memorial stones in question, Thornhill (runic) III, identifies women as both commissioner and person memorialized.⁴⁸ One other inscriptional poem (that on the Sutton brooch) is also clearly associated with a woman’s name, and in this context, we should probably note the presence of a female name (as a commissioner of the goldsmiths’ work?) in the goldsmiths’ colophonic inscription in BL Additional 40,000.⁴⁹ Although women are rarely associated with Old English verse (as either authors or audiences) in the mainstream manuscript tradition, their names (while not as frequent as those of men) certainly occur in association with Old English verse in the inscriptional tradition. Tiny as the surviving inscriptional tradition is, then, it nevertheless appears to offer more for our understanding of the relationship between women and Old English verse than virtually the whole of the manuscript tradition.⁵⁰

Conclusions

What I have suggested in this chapter, ultimately, is that there were at least three traditions of vernacular verse expression in Anglo-Saxon England, each with its own distinct configuration of the relationship between poetic expression and the role of the author. Most familiar to literary readers, of course, is what I have labelled ‘the local audience tradition’ of Old English poetry, where scribes or compilers seemingly anticipated a close and

correspondingly small audience for their works, and did not need to provide identifying or contextualizing ascriptions of authorship as a result. In the earliest stages of this tradition (which probably always featured narrative poems prominently, but also included wisdom literature), individual performances of a poem probably were, indeed, instantiations of a multiform tradition, a true inheritance from an oral-formulaic tradition. The bulk of what we know and appreciate today as the most ‘literary’ of Old English poetry probably derived not only its alliterative and formulaic form from this tradition, but perhaps also its hesitance in ascribing authorship in manuscript copies. From such a perspective Cynewulf’s self-naming has more in common with (the fictional) Deor’s and Widsith’s implicit requests for worldly support than it has to do with Bede’s or Alfred’s self-naming. In addition, the ephemerality of truly oral performance is perhaps reflected, within this anonymously recorded, ‘local audience’ poetic tradition, in these poems’ almost exclusive preservation in unique copies. Because of the number and interest of the works surviving from this ‘anonymous tradition,’ this particular strand of poetic expression, for better or worse, has often been seen as the central (if not the only) tradition of Old English verse, prompting comments such as Carol Braun Pasternack’s claim (as discussed in the introduction) that ‘the textuality of Old English poetry does not employ the idea of the author’ (17). In this tradition, even if readers must invoke an author function as part of the process of reading, that author function is articulated anonymously.

Beginning with Bede’s story of Cædmon, however, a second tradition of Old English verse developed, in which an author’s name gave poetic texts a cultural prominence that was directly associated with their multiple copying, precisely because these works were prepared with a distant audience in mind, exemplified most prominently by the works of Bede, Alfred, and Ælfric. Works composed within this tradition employed the author-figure in a fashion that remains familiar to this day, as a mode of contextualizing and controlling interpretation. While Cædmon and Alfred (or his helpers) certainly continued to compose largely within a formulaic tradition (see [chapter 2](#)), it seems likely that the author function within this tradition did eventually become associated with unique and personal (named)

poetic expression. But while Cædmon, Alfred, and Ælfric are the most prominent authors within this verse tradition, the anonymously presented tenth-century poems of the *Chronicle* probably belong here as well, because their publication and authority was almost certainly assured by their placement in the *Chronicle*, even if no authorizing name was ever explicitly connected to either these poems or to the *Chronicle* itself; certainly the *Chronicle* poems should probably be understood as written with a distant, multiple audience in mind, as their preservation in multiple copies would confirm. *The Metrical Psalms*, surviving only fragmentarily, can be at least tentatively placed in this tradition (even if no ascription of authorship survives for them) because of their own apparent authority, as they supplemented Alfred's prose translation of the psalms, appeared in the Benedictine Office, filled in gaps in the Eadwine gloss, and were quoted in *The Menologium* (see [chapter 3](#)). The frequent reuse of *The Metrical Psalms* attests to their having been seen as authoritative, and given their cultural prominence one certainly wonders if, in their original context, their author's name was not clearly indicated.

The third tradition of Old English verse that I have described in this chapter is the 'inscriptional' tradition, with a heritage, it seems, as long as (or even longer than) either of the other two, although less well attested in surviving monuments and less well known to modern literary readers. In the inscriptional tradition, the association between specific verse texts and particular individuals is especially strong, but the naming of such individuals does not function to give those texts authority, in the sense of a valuable authorial originality or a guarantee of textual accuracy. Indeed, inscriptional poems are highly formulaic and (in that sense) often hardly original.⁵¹ Rather, the author-figures in the inscriptional tradition are largely indistinguishable from commissioners: the function of naming within these texts is to indicate not who put the words in a particular order, but rather whose wishes and thoughts are being communicated. These figures, if not 'authors' in our most familiar sense, are clearly authorizers, and it is within this tradition that we find the most extensive set of personal names to be associated with verse expression in Old English. Indeed, at first glance, the names of the authorizing figures in the inscriptional tradition might prompt

us to categorize them along with Foucault's non-authorial letter-senders and contract-signers ('Author' 107-8; see pp. 8-9 above), and that while they name interested parties, they are not actually authors. But the use of verse in the inscriptions in question must shift these texts toward the literary pole, as would the use of verse in a contract or a letter.⁵² The use of verse, as a heightened register of language, always casts readers into the realm of the literary, even while some uses of verse remind us that our own notions of what constitutes the literary may be unnecessarily narrow.

To a degree, it is important to recognize these simultaneous and enduring traditions of Old English verse expression because our understanding of any particular work must reflect which of these traditions it primarily springs from. But further, as the links between the poetic colophons and the artisanal inscriptions attest, the boundaries between these traditions were permeable, and individual texts might partake of one or more of these traditions (and their associated authorial dynamics). A manuscript might contain an 'inscriptional' colophonic poem; the alliterative collocation of 'gebiddap' and 'beacne' in *Dream of the Rood* 83a (the only example of 'gebiddap' in the ASPR) might suggest influence from the inscriptional tradition that is especially important considering the Ruthwell poetic inscription; *Cædmon's Hymn* might have been composed as an oral-formulaic poem, but it was frequently recopied (presumably via the influence of Bede's authority) as if by an 'authoritative' author. As such examples of boundary leakage suggest, the relationship between author, authority, and audience was sometimes a contested relationship within or between the various traditions of Old English verse. Likewise, the tension between writing and formulaic composition was obviously complex, as the inscriptional tradition in particular attests. To an important degree, the chapters that follow will take up various dynamics of the relationships between writing and formulaic composition, authorial naming and textual originality, and readers and poems.

2 The Audience for Saxon Songs in the Late Ninth Century

Asser's *Life of King Alfred* could hardly be clearer in stressing Alfred's lifelong interest in what Asser describes as 'carmina Saxonica' ('Saxon songs'; Stevenson 59).¹ Asser suggests that Alfred listens to such songs 'die noctuque' in chapter 22 (by day and night; Stevenson 20). We are also told that Alfred reads and learns such poems by heart in chapter 76 and that his children learn them in chapter 75. In a famous and much-discussed story in chapter 23, Alfred wins a boyhood competition among his brothers (and organized by his mother) for the ownership of a book of poems with an especially beautiful initial letter.² According to Asser's testimony, then, the second half of the ninth century seems to have been a virtual golden age for the reception of Old English verse, with a regular audience at the very highest levels of society, an audience that spanned at least three generations of the West Saxon royal family.

Yet not a single ninth-century manuscript including Old English verse survives that pre-dates Alfred's famous literacy and education program as announced in the letter prefacing his translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*.³ The Lancashire ring's one-line poetic inscription is probably the only poetic text to survive in a contemporary copy from this period, although it remains possible that poems preserved in later copies might derive from Alfred's day or even earlier in the ninth century.⁴ Regardless, it remains a curious fact of Old English literary history that, despite Asser's testimony about a culturally prominent audience for Old English verse, surviving manuscript evidence offers no direct indication at all of what sorts of 'Saxon songs' Alfred and his family might have listened to. The ninth-century depredations of the Vikings might be blamed for this state of affairs, although it seems to be clear that Wessex itself was despoiled less thoroughly than the kingdoms to the north and east, and it is Alfred's Wessex, of course, that Asser describes.

What concrete manuscript evidence we have for ninth-century 'carmina Saxonica' comes, instead, from the continent, where *The Heliand* is preserved in one fairly complete mid-ninth-century manuscript, along with other ninth-century fragments (apparently from different manuscripts) conventionally called the Prague and Straubing fragments (though now held in Berlin and Munich respectively).⁵ Additionally, passages from both *The Heliand* and the Old Saxon *Genesis* were copied in the ninth century into a manuscript now in the Vatican.⁶ Compared with the record from England, this is a flowering indeed, with at least four manuscripts of Old Saxon poetry surviving from the ninth century, at least as fragments. To these we might also add the ninth-century manuscript of *Das Hildebrandlied*, which, even if we identify its dialectally mixed text as Old High German, was apparently copied at Fulda, closely neighbouring the Old Saxon speech area.⁷ These continental texts, which initially might seem only marginally relevant to the history of Old English verse (they are mostly known to scholars of Old English only because *Genesis B* is well known as a translation from Old Saxon), might rather be understood as part of a significant but underappreciated ninth-century cross-channel tradition of 'carmina Saxonica.' If Anglo-Saxon manuscript evidence from the pre-Alfredian ninth century is vanishingly scarce, the continental evidence can at least serve to reassure us that at least some Saxon poetry was indeed current. Indeed, it is just possible that the 'book of English poetry' (Keynes and Lapidge 75) that Alfred won in his mother's contest included *The Heliand*.⁸

In this chapter, I will address the issue of audience (and, relatedly, authorship) in the late ninth century by trying to answer the question of just what sorts of 'Saxon songs' Alfred might have known, through an examination of a variety of underappreciated kinds of evidence. Metrical evidence (as I have argued elsewhere) suggests that a handful of poems exhibit old Saxon influence of one variety or another, and the most likely place and time for such influence, it seems clear, is at Alfred's court. But further, I will suggest that the influence from old Saxon can point the way to a reconsideration of the significance of what has often been labelled 'formulaic' evidence. Specifically, at least some lexical items and poetic collocations which were not previously current in Old English were first borrowed into Old

English verse directly from Old Saxon during Alfred's time. These borrowings, I will argue, suggest that the composition of at least some Old English verse had become thoroughly literate in its orientation by the late ninth century. Finally, a reappraisal of the significance of formulas and poetic parallels makes it possible to identify a number of other poems with strong claims to have been known at Alfred's court, including *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, *Genesis A*, and *Elene*. It is important, therefore, to begin with the Old Saxon evidence.

Old Saxonisms and Alfredian Poetry: Formulaic Evidence

Although the Anglo-Saxon contribution to the Carolingian world, mediated powerfully through figures such as Boniface and Alcuin, has long been recognized, Joanna Story's valuable recent book, *Carolingian Connections*, reminds us of the degree to which the cultural interchange operated in the opposite direction as well. Although Story's discussion only takes her up to the middle of the ninth century, Æthelwulf's brief sojourn at the court of Charles the Bald (as well as his marriage to Charles's daughter Judith in 856) suggests that the later ninth century might have been a time of especially clear connections between Wessex and the continent. When, at the end of the century, Alfred himself employed John the Old Saxon as part of his own international team of scholars, he not only reversed the direction of Charlemagne's employment of Alcuin but forged or reformed a tie between the Saxons of Wessex and those of Saxony.

Linguistically, continental Old Saxon and English West Saxon seem to have been close in this period, despite the disciplinary structures of modern universities that generally place the study of the one in English departments and the study of the other in German programs. A.N. Doane, writing about *Genesis B* as a translation of the Old Saxon *Genesis*, claims:

It is inaccurate, however, to speak of a 'translation' at all. Old Saxon and West-Saxon differ considerably in detail but were mutually intelligible dialects exactly as were Northumbrian and West-Saxon. (*Saxon Genesis* 49)

Indeed, modern readers of Old English who first tackle *The Heliand* or the Old Saxon *Genesis* usually find the phonology and orthography to be the biggest hurdles to their understanding, with the specifically Old Saxon lexicon a much less troubling feature. Thus, in Orrin Robinson's brief but useful account of Old Saxon, over six pages are devoted to orthography and phonology, but only two and a half pages to inflectional morphology and syntax (116-25). A simple comparison of some familiar individual Old English words taken from the Northumbrian and West Saxon versions of *Cædmon's Hymn*, alongside their Old Saxon cognates, may give at least a general impression of the degree of variation between these dialects and languages, as shown in [Table 2.1](#). Such examples may suggest that West Saxon and Northumbrian are probably closer to each other than either is to Old Saxon, but the distance between all three varieties, in any case, is not especially far.

Table 2.1 Old Saxon and Old English Spellings

West Saxon	Northumbrian
<i>drifan</i>	<i>drifan</i>
<i>halig</i>	<i>halig</i>
<i>monkynnes</i>	<i>monkynnes</i>
<i>albmihig</i>	<i>albmihig</i>

Indeed, a number of Old English and Old Saxon verses differ only by orthography. One example is *Beowulf* 1805a, 'fuse to farene' (eager to set out; manuscript reading 'farene ne'), which is closely paralleled in *Heliand* 5656a, 'fûs te faranne' (cf. *Hel* 650a, 4782a); another example can be found in *Genesis A* 2670a, 'waldendes word' (the Lord's word; cf. *JDay 1* 112a) and *Heliand* 575a, 'uualdandes uuord' (cf. *Hel* 689a, 2259a, 3004a, and 3789a).⁹ Numerous other examples could be given, and the linguistic and poetic similarities suggest that Alfred and his family might have been well able to appreciate Old Saxon poetry, even in an untranslated state.

Of course, no Old Saxon poetic manuscripts survive from the England of Alfred's day, either, and thus we have no concrete manuscript evidence that Old Saxon poems were, in fact, read in Alfred's (or his father's) court, although the translation of *Genesis*

B was very likely accomplished in the second half of the ninth century.¹⁰ Moving beyond *Genesis B*, however, I have recently argued that a striking number of metrical anomalies in four Old English poems (*The Dream of the Rood*, *Solomon and Saturn*, *The Battle of Finnsburh*, and *The Metrical Preface to Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues*) can be recognized as metrical evidence of Old Saxon influence; in each case, I suggested the metrical evidence suggests a date of composition for these poems during Alfred's reign.¹¹ Here I will present additional evidence to support that earlier conclusion.

The evidence to be considered here lies in the realm of what has come to be called 'formulaic' evidence, although this term is less precise, perhaps, than we might wish. In the current understanding of Old English verse and its composition, a formula is defined as 'a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea' (Parry's definition, cited by Magoun 48). Two areas of this definition demand critical scrutiny. First, since Parry's definition was derived primarily from his work on Homeric hexameters, the question of what counts as 'the same metrical conditions' in Old English is very much at issue; for my purposes, I will assume that at least two stressed positions in a verse or line must share identical morphemes which are scanned on the same metrical structure in order to be counted as potentially formulaic. Thus, to take a set of examples I have discussed elsewhere, 'wide ond side' is a full-verse formula attested at least ten times in Old English verse; 'side ond wide,' with four attestations, is a separate formula (because the key morphemes are not identically placed in the metrical structure), but *Christ and Satan* 698b, 'hu wid and sid,' should not obviously be considered a formula at all, because 'wid' and 'sid' are here used uniquely on the stressed positions of a Type B verse, rather than in Type A.¹² Of course, if more examples were attested to show 'wid' and 'sid' in Type B, we could then conclude that it, too, was formulaic, and the presumptive loss of written Old English poems, like our lack of access to truly oral works, may hinder our ability to accurately identify phrases that would have clearly counted as formulas to Anglo-Saxon poets.

This example thus brings us to the second problematic aspect of Parry's definition: given our limited corpus, how might we

assess whether a given group of words is ‘regularly employed’ or not? For formulas like ‘wide ond side’ that appear in a wide variety of works, the criterion of ‘regularly employed’ is obviously met, but for groups of words appearing only once or even twice within the surviving corpus of poems, this criterion is much harder to evaluate. It will be my practice here (and in subsequent chapters) to operate on the following basis: a potential formula that appears in three separate Old English poetic works shows clear evidence of widespread (hence ‘regular’) usage; potential formulas appearing only once or twice within the Old English poetic corpus must be evaluated on a case by case basis to evaluate the likelihood of their being formulaic.¹³ At stake here is the very real possibility, as we shall see, that a ‘group of words’ may be borrowed directly by a poet from a pre-existing text, and if that happens, it provides no useful evidence at all for truly ‘formulaic’ expression.

A concrete example may help clarify the issues involved. When considering only *Genesis B*, for example, a reader of Old English might suspect that verse 285a, ‘hæleþas heardmode’ (bold warriors) might well be an Old English formula, since the words involved seem to make a natural alliterative pair with an obviously useful ‘essential meaning.’ Yet the two words are not collocated elsewhere in Old English verse, and, as it turns out, the single word ‘heardmode’ itself appears nowhere else in Old English poetry.¹⁴ Importantly, however, *Heliand* 3137a reads ‘helið hardmōdig’ (bold warrior). Given that *Genesis B* is known on other grounds to have been a translation from Old Saxon, we should probably conclude that there is no evidence at all for ‘hæleþas heardmode’ being an Old English formula, although its appearance in both *The Heliand* and *Genesis B* suggests it was probably formulaic in Old Saxon.¹⁵ Though many formulas are, indeed, shared by both traditions, *Genesis B* contains numerous similar examples of verses that represent formulas in Old Saxon for which there is little or no evidence that the groups of words in question were equally formulaic in Old English.

This very circumstance, in fact, opens the door for an analysis of parallel phrases between Alfredian poems and Old Saxon poems that can support the metrical argument I made in ‘Old Saxon Influence’ that Old Saxon poetry influenced Alfredian verse. Several specific examples make the case quite clear. It is

useful to begin by considering the alliterative collocations of ‘monna’ and ‘modsefan,’ as listed in [Table 2.2](#).¹⁶

As [Table 2.2](#) indicates, the half-line ‘monna modsefan’ appears in Old English only in *The Meters of Boethius*, which is clearly Alfredian, while the collocation that alliteratively joins ‘modsefa’ (Ssx) in the second foot of the a-line to ‘monna’ in the b-line is recorded only in *The Meters* and in *Solomon and Saturn*.¹⁷ Each usage is thus very rare within Old English (each appearing only twice, in one or two Alfredian-era poems), but each is attested at least twice in the much smaller Old Saxon corpus represented (here) by *The Heliand*.¹⁸ Since, as noted above, *Solomon and Saturn* also clearly has extensive Old Saxon metrical influence, it seems especially likely that *Solomon and Saturn* borrows this usage from the Old Saxon poetic tradition, suggesting that this poet’s apparent contemporary, the *Meters* poet, also draws these collocations from Old Saxon. Although *The Meters of Boethius* shows comparatively little evidence of metrical influence from Old Saxon, these verses do suggest that they were composed in the same Old-Saxon-influenced Alfredian milieu as *Solomon and Saturn*.

Table 2.2 ‘Monna’ and ‘Modsefa’ in Old English and Old Saxon Verse

<i>Met</i> 7 24a: monna modsefan
<i>Met</i> 22 31a: monna modsefan
<i>Hel</i> 5242a: manno mōdse ð on
<i>Hel</i> 2317a: an thero manno mōdse ð on
<i>Hel</i> 2924a: thero manno mōdse ð on
<i>Met</i> 31 22: þæt se modsefa monna æniges
<i>MSol</i> 241: amyrgað modsefa manna gehwylces
<i>Hel</i> 1751: managoro mōdsebon manno cunnies
<i>Hel</i> 4557: an iro mōdsebon manno uuarun

Although these examples are revealing, if the evidence were confined to them alone, this line of argument would carry little weight, I think. But there are a significant number of verses from Alfredian poems that seem to derive directly from Old Saxon originals, as the following discussion suggests. An example from a different poem, which also shows clear signs of cross-linguistic metrical influence, is *Dream of the Rood* 136a, ‘daga geh-wylce,’ which (familiar as it might seem) shows no evidence of having

been an Old English poetic formula, as it occurs nowhere else in the ASPR.¹⁹ The traditional Old English form of the verse would seem to be ‘dogora gehwilce’ (compare *Beo* 1090a; *GuthA* 56b; *Sat* 241a). A close cognate of the *Dream* verse, however, appears three times in *The Heliand* (1592b, ‘dago gehuulicas’; see also 1670b and 3913b).²⁰ Importantly, *The Meters of Boethius* uses only the more conventional Old English formula, ‘dogora gehwelce,’ with five examples (*Met*13 21b; *Met*20 175a, 209a; *Met*22 61b; and *Met*28 66a), suggesting that the occurrence of ‘daga gehwilce’ in *The Dream* was not part of a widespread shift in Old English poetic expression. Although possibly a mere prosaic expression, *The Dream*’s ‘daga gehwilce’ is likely to be borrowed from the Old Saxon formula, especially given the poem’s other debts to Old Saxon.

Another especially clear case involves *Meter 18*, verse 2a, ‘wraða willa.’ The Bessinger-Smith concordance lists this verse as the only one to combine these lexical items in Old English (they are alliteratively linked across the caesura in *PPs* 52.1 4 and *Whale* 35).²¹ But forms of ‘uurêð’ and ‘uuil-lion’ are used within a formulaic half-line at least seventeen times in *The Heliand* and once in the Old Saxon *Genesis*.²² A comparison between the Boethian prose and verse here is instructive. Where the prose opening of this passage begins ‘Hwæt, se yfela willa unrihtthæmedes gedrefð fulneah ælces libbendes monnes mod’ (Lo, the evil desire for adultery troubles nearly every living man’s heart; Sedgfield 71), the verse version is somewhat expanded:

Eala ðæt se yfla unrihta gedefð
wraða willa wohhæmetes
þæt he mid ealle gedræfð anra gehwylces
monna cynnes mod fulneah ðon. (Meter 18, 1-4)

(Alas that the wicked, hostile desire for adultery does wrong such that it almost entirely troubles the heart of every one of the race of men.)

The poetic restructuring is extensive enough here, I think, that it is appropriate to conclude that verse 2a was introduced as a familiar and effective doubly-alliterating a-line formula with ‘willa.’ If so, it probably derives from Old Saxon, where it was clearly a common formula, not from Old English, where it does

not appear to have been ‘regularly employed,’ unless we hypothesize a large amount of lost data.

A further notable example can be found in *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care*, which uses one formula potentially borrowed directly from Old Saxon. Compare

CPPref 14a: brengan bi ðære bisene

GenB 680a: broht from his bysene

While ‘bisen’ is a relatively infrequent word in Old English verse, it is still notable that these are the only verses in the ASPR to employ this alliterative pairing.²³ It might be possible to suggest that Alfred and the *Genesis B* poet (or translator) independently composed these verses, and that they are therefore not related at all, but given the likelihood that *Genesis B* was an Alfredian-era translation, it seems more likely that *The Metrical Preface*’s verse derives from Old Saxon either directly or via *Genesis B*. Notably, ‘bisene’ in *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* has sometimes been seen as a lexical Old Saxonism.²⁴ The question of whether *The Metrical Preface* derived this verse from *Genesis B* or directly from the *Old Saxon Genesis* probably cannot be determined, but the import of the similarity is the same in either case: *The Metrical Preface* is unlikely to derive this verse from any formula occurring in the inherited Old English poetic tradition.

Two further examples appear to clinch the case, because they involve not only formulas, but lexical items that were apparently new to Old English during the Alfredian period. The first concerns ‘ofermod’ (pride or proud), a word often discussed in relation to *Maldon*, and its close relative ‘ofermetto’ (pride). [Table 2.3](#) lists all of these words’ appearances in the ASPR.

Table 2.3 ‘Ofermod’ and ‘Ofermetto’ in the ASPR

GenB 262b: ofermod wesan

GenB 272a: se engel ofermodes

GenB 293b: ofermede micel

GenB 332a: and þum ofermetto

GenB 337a: and þurh ofermetto

GenB 338a: þa spræc se ofermoda cyning

GenB 351a: and his ofermetto

Vain 75a: se þe on ofermedum

MSol 452b: and ðæs ofermodan
Met5 32a: mid ofermettum
Met7 8a wið ofermetta
Met10 18a: Eala, ofermodan
Met17 17a: ofermodigan
Met24 59a: and þa ofermodan
Met25 1b: be ðæm ofermodum
Met25 44a: yfla ofermetta
PPs 118.57 1a: Oftust ofermodige
Mald 89b: for his ofermode
Instr 130a: for his ofermode
Instr 234a: for þam ofermettum

In [Table 2.3](#) we see a variety of specific metrical types, though generally placing the key elements on an Ssx foot, allowing most of these examples to be seen as formulaic.²⁵ Notably, fifteen of the twenty examples in [Table 2.3](#) come from Alfredian works (*Genesis B*, *Solomon and Saturn*, and *The Meters*); four others are clearly later, as they belong to the late Old English verse tradition (*The Metrical Psalms*, *Maldon*, and *Instructions for Christians*). This poetic evidence thus seems to strongly support Mechthild Gretsch's suggestion that King Alfred's exclusive use of 'ofermod' and 'ofermettu' in prose texts may have occurred 'under the influence of John the Old Saxon' (*Intellectual Foundations* 415), given that both words seem new to Old English in the ninth century and that both words are well attested in Old Saxon and were probably 'the principal Old Saxon terms in this semantic field' (415). Perhaps the evidence of [Table 2.3](#) should be seen as lexical rather than formulaic evidence for Old Saxon influence, but the trend seems clear: 'ofermode' and 'ofermettu' enter into the Old English poetic vocabulary in Alfredian works.

Significantly, only the *Vainglory* example has the potential to run counter to the trend. Although the date of its composition is very difficult to assess, note that *Vainglory* uses the more traditional Old English word ('oferhygd') not less than four times (23b, 43b, 53a, 58b), and if we hypothesize that *Vainglory*'s composition may be pre-Alfredian, it is possible that the Exeter scribe substituted the more recent synonym, either through the functioning of 'formulaic reading' or simply to limit the repetitiveness of the diction.²⁶ Obviously, the date of the Exeter

scribe's activities is well after the Alfredian period, and the frequency of this usage (in both prose and verse) would have presumably caused it to become naturalized as an acceptable Old English word, opening the door for its potential appearance via formulaic reading. In short, [Table 2.3](#) suggests that 'ofermod' and 'ofermetto' were apparently introduced into Old English poetry as well as prose in the Alfredian period, either from *Genesis B* or perhaps (as Gretsich suggests) from Old Saxon more generally. Both words were then used in *Solomon and Saturn* and *The Meters of Boethius* before passing into the wider realm of Old English verse, although never completely replacing 'oferhygd.'

An equally interesting example concerns the trisyllabic 'unigmet'/'ungemet' word-pair, which appears in the ASPR in Type A verses only as shown in [Table 2.4](#).

Once again, it is notable that the verses in question appear in *Genesis B* and *The Meters* (both Alfredian) and in the later *Metrical Psalms* and *Exhortation to Christian Living*. Although his comments are somewhat ambiguous, in his glossary to *Genesis B*, Doane appears to identify the usage of uninflected 'ungemet' as an Old Saxonism, suggesting that old English preferred to use oblique cases ('ungemete,' 'ungemetes,' and 'ungemetum') rather than adverbial 'ungemet' (392; s.v. 'un-gemet').²⁷ Verses with the inflected forms appear in poems likely to be both earlier and later, and so again we seem to have here evidence of a specific formula or formulaic system borrowed into Old English in Alfred's day, and then passed on to later poets.²⁸

Table 2.4 Trisyllabic 'Unigmet'/'Ungemet' in Type A Verses

<i>GenB</i> 313b:	ungemet lange
<i>Met7</i> 28b:	ungemet gemen
<i>Met7</i> 33b:	unigmet fæstne
<i>Met10</i> 9b:	unigmet lytel
<i>PPs</i> 56.5 4b:	ungemet scarepe
<i>PPs</i> 118.61 2a:	ungemet geneahhie
<i>Exhort</i> 45a:	ungemet wilnung

In attributing verses, formulas, and lexical items like 'daga gehwylce,' 'bringan + bysene,' 'wraða willa,' 'monna modsefan,' 'ofermode,' and 'ungemet' to borrowings from Old Saxon, it is necessary, of course, to explicitly rule out the possibility that all

of these items were simply part of the common West Germanic poetic heritage, preserved and transmitted separately in Old English and Old Saxon oral-formulaic contexts. To my mind, the possibility of descent from a common ancestor is so remote as to make it untenable as a position. In the case of all these examples, which are attested nowhere else in Old English verse (with the possible exception of the single verse from *Vainglory*, for which an alternate explanation is eminently plausible), we would have to imagine a centuries-long Old English tradition of using these verses and words (and using them often enough to keep them living in the oral tradition), but where that tradition, by mere chance, left no other traces except in Alfredian and later texts. Given that a number of these very same Alfredian texts exhibit other, independent evidence of Old Saxon influence, we would clearly be committed to accepting a remarkable coincidence. It is far more plausible to understand these formulas as simply being further examples of direct influence from the Old Saxon poems themselves.

Thus these lexical and formulaic examples add to the evidence that Alfred's court must have been characterized by significant influence from Old Saxon poetry.²⁹ A brief recap is in order, however. Certainly Wulfsgie's *Metrical Preface to Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues* (with its metrical Old Saxonisms) cannot have pre-dated Alfred's translation program, and if the attribution to Wulfsgie is correct, it must pre-date Wulfsgie's death in 900.³⁰ *The Meters of Boethius*, using a handful of formulas taken directly from Old Saxon, must post-date the Alfredian-era prose translation, but they may have been completed very shortly after the prose. As noted above, the most commonly accepted dates for the translation of *Genesis B* and the writing of *Solomon and Saturn* cluster around 900; both poems show metrical, lexical, and formulaic Old Saxonisms, and the case for *Genesis B* as a direct translation seems incontrovertible. Metrical features of *Finnsburh* have frequently led critics to assign it a fairly late date;³¹ recognizing that many of these metrical features derive from Old Saxon actually helps pin down the date more precisely. *The Dream of the Rood* has often been assigned a very early date on the basis of the presumed date of the Ruthwell cross, but a number of recent studies have seriously called the early dating of the Ruthwell poetic inscription into question, and

assigning an Alfredian date for *The Dream of the Rood* on the basis of its metrical and formulaic Old Saxonisms would coincide well with these studies.³² In short, as I conclude in my ‘Old Saxon Influence’ essay, the clustering of Old Saxonisms in poems that are certainly Alfredian itself lends support for identifying *The Dream of the Rood* and *Finnsburh* as Alfredian, and the evidence is even stronger when we consider the formulaic examples discussed here.

While Old English poems might theoretically show Old Saxon influence from any period in which there was contact between England and the continent (that is, in virtually any period), the evidence presented here of specific formulas borrowed from old Saxon indicates that it was probably *The Heliand* and the old Saxon *Genesis* that were the particular sources of these formulas at this place and time. On the one hand, both old Saxon poems were very probably known and read at Alfred’s court (*Genesis B* was almost surely translated there, and the ancestor of the Cotton *Heliand* manuscript is likely to have arrived in the ninth century as well). On the other hand, formulas borrowed at any earlier point in time would presumably have left traces in other works. The character of the lexical and formulaic borrowings (especially when seen in the context of the non-lexical metrical influences) suggests a literate mode of influence, in which old Saxonisms appear in Old English verse because they had been read (silently or out loud) and borrowed from books containing *The Heliand* and *Genesis*. The following section offers additional support for such a perspective.

The Literate, Old English Grounding of Alfredian Poetry

Two interrelated points must be made clearly before proceeding. First, Alfredian poetry seems to have been composed in a highly literate milieu, with no clear evidence for ‘orality’ (at least in the sense of active influence from practising oral-formulaic poets). Second, except for the case of *Genesis B*, where the Old Saxon influence is particularly extensive and regular, all of the poems in question were apparently composed in Old English, not Old Saxon.

The issue of Alfredian literate composition seems obvious, and

yet it is worthwhile to summarize the evidence in favour of it. In the case of *Genesis B*, for example, it is clear that the Old English and Old Saxon versions are too similar to be explained as independent transcripts of oral performances of a similar poem differing only in language or dialect. The poem was modified, as Doane puts it ‘word by word, phoneme by phoneme’ (*Saxon Genesis* 49), in such a way as to make it clear that it was accomplished by working closely with a written text. Likewise, the fact that *The Meters of Boethius* was prepared as a poetic version of a pre-existing prose text provides unequivocal evidence of a process highly mediated by literacy, as Larry Benson’s classic discussion makes clear. The *Metrical Prefaces* (to the *Pastoral Care* and to *Wærferth’s Translation of Gregory’s Dialogues*) were, of course, prepared in conjunction with extended translations of Latin texts into Old English, and they take the textual genealogies of those translations as part of their explicit content. *Solomon and Saturn*, of course, includes a lengthy discourse on the spiritual efficacy of the very letters of the Latin Pater Noster, another valorization of literacy within the content of the text, and it has other investments in literacy and books, as discussed below. These poems so far considered in this paragraph stand as nearly 3000 lines of verse; if the metrical and ‘formulaic’ arguments for understanding *Finnsburh* and *The Dream of the Rood* as also being Alfredian are correct, they add only about 200 lines to the total, and the fact that these poems do not equally clearly demonstrate a similar investment in literacy itself does little to undermine the general conclusion.³³

Against this evidence for a literate perspective and a literate mode of poetic composition, there stands very little clear evidence for oral-formulaic performance of poetry anywhere in the Alfredian milieu. The testimony of Asser, of course, seems primarily focused on manuscript poems, and the nature of the Old Saxon metrical influence would seem to clearly rule out orality as a mechanism for it. Specifically, the appearance of Old Saxon metrical forms in a poem like *Solomon and Saturn* might be imagined as oral influence if formulas heard by the poet were simply imported into the poem. But consider a verse such as *Solomon and Saturn* 57a, ‘wuldorlicne wlite’ (scanned Sx_sx/S), where there is no evidence of a specific Old Saxon formula underlying the Old English verse, because ‘wuldor’ was

apparently not current as a word in old Saxon.³⁴ Such an example would seem to rule out the possibility of purely oral influence. If we hypothesize oral transmission from an old Saxon oral poet, we would expect the innovative verse types and old Saxon lexis to travel together, because the transmission process from one poet to another would amount to a deep, immersive exposure to old Saxon poetry, involving the acquisition of an internalized metrical grammar. But something quite different seems to occur in this example: an old Saxon verse type appears that involves a specifically Old English word. We must conclude that the innovative metrical form is not generated oral-formulaically, but rather that we have a poet who accepts old Saxon metrical forms and applies that acceptance to new verses composed in Old English.

Even so, the modern critical perspective that sees orality and literacy working hand in hand during the Anglo-Saxon period might be taken to suggest that even a work like *The Meters of Boethius* might have been composed through a process that was identifiably ‘oral,’ even if mediated through literacy. I think, however, that at least three types of evidence make it impossible to envision the *Meters* poet as following Cædmon’s program, listening to or reconsidering the Boethian *Meters*’ original Old English prose, ruminating upon it, and then producing *The Meters* as we have it exactly as an oral poet would have done.³⁵ Occasionally, for example, *The Meters* (like *Solomon and Saturn*) uses verse forms that are unmetrical in Old English, such as *Meter* 9 41a, ‘garsecg embegyr̥t,’ which must be scanned as Ss/(xx)S, unless we interpret it as influenced by old Saxon Type DS (Ssxx/S).³⁶ Even more troubling metrically are verses like *Meter* 2 18b, ‘Ne synt pa word soð’ (Type xA: xx/(x)Ss), which classical Old English and Old Saxon both exclude from the b-line.³⁷ Although it is not impossible for an oral poet to compose unmetrical verses, such verses are explicitly non-traditional, and thus at least suggestive of a literate mode of composition.

In addition, *The Meters* also uses a handful of ‘class I’ poetic compounds (which are always marked for alliteration) in non-alliterating positions.³⁸ These include ‘ealdegeweorc’ (*Met*11 40b; *Met*20 116b); ‘frumsceaf̥t’ (*Met*17 25b); ‘lagustream’ (*Met*11 43b, *Met*20 111b); and ‘merestream’ (*Met*20 114b). With the exception of only four verses from the later *Metrical Psalms* (*PPs* 77.67 3b;

104.31 1b; 134.8 3b; 135.10 1b, all involving ‘frumbearn’ or ‘frumcynn’), compounds with these initial elements always alliterate in other Old English poetry. Since the oral-traditional purpose of class I compounds must have been to allow alliterative alternants (as in ‘lagustream’ and ‘merestream’), the non-alliterative use of these compounds in *The Meters* suggests only that the poet recognizes them as poetic diction, and the use of these compounds in non-alliterating positions must indicate a lack of familiarity with their traditional function that is incompatible with a hypothesis of oral composition.

Third, and equally significant, other alliterative choices of the *Meters* poet also sometimes differ from what we would expect from an oral poet. Consider the following two passages and their origins in the Boethian prose:

*Forhwam wolde ge, weoruldfrynd mine,
secgan oððe singan þæt ic gesælic mon
wære on weorulde? Ne synt þa word soð* (Meter 2
16-18)

(Why would you, world-friend of mine, say or sing that I am a fortunate man in this world? Those words are not true.)

The prose source for this passage reads: ‘To hwon sceoldon la mine friend seggan þæt ic gesælig mon wære?’ (Griffiths 56; Why indeed should my friend say that I am a fortunate man?). Here, the word ‘wære’ from the prose appears to generate both ‘on weorulde’ and ‘word.’ The same strategy is used in *Meter 8*:

*Eala, hwæt se forma feohgitsere
wære on wo rulde, se pas wongstedas
grof æfter golde and æfter gimcynnum* (Meter 8
55-7)

(Alas, that there was a first treasure-coveter in this world, who dug the field-places for gold, and for various gems.)

For this passage, the prose original reads: ‘Æla, hwæt se forma gitsere wære, þe ærest pa eorpan ongan delfan æfter golde, 7 æfter gimum’ (Griffiths 70; Alas, that there was a first coveter, who first began to delve the earth after gold and after gems).³⁹ Strikingly, both of these versified passages appear to derive the

use of ‘w-’ alliteration from the prose’s ‘wære,’ although this word rarely alliterates in Old English poetry. It seems very unlikely that an oral poet would pick up on a word of such low semantic value as the basis for the alliteration of these lines. But it is perfectly plausible to suppose that a literate poet, composing directly from a prose text, might do so.⁴⁰ As these examples suggest, the metrical and compositional practices exemplified in *The Meters of Boethius* seem a poor match to the nature of truly oral-formulaic composition, but they are consonant with a literate method. As such, it seems we can safely rule out the possibility that *The Meters* was composed harp in hand, and conclude that it was rather composed within the parameters of literate activity.

The existence of *Genesis B* as a translation from old Saxon, however, at least raises the possibility that some or all of these Alfredian poems that show old Saxon influence were composed in old Saxon and then translated into Old English.⁴¹ Yet all of the poems in question except for *Genesis B* do seem to have been composed in Old English. *The Dream of the Rood* and *Solomon and Saturn*, for example, both use ‘wuldor’ and ‘hlaford,’ words that seem not to have been current in Old Saxon, although even *Genesis B* uses ‘wuldor.’⁴² The presence of Old Saxon words, formulas, and metrical forms, then, generally must have the character of borrowings. A little-understood passage from *Solomon and Saturn* confirms that poem’s Old English origin:

Ac hwæt is se dumba, se ðe on sumre dene resteð?
Swiðe snyttrað, hafað seofon tungan;
hafað tungena gehwylc XX orða,
hafað orða gewhylc engles snytro,
ðara ðe wile anra hwylc uppe bringan
ðæt ðu ðære gyldnan gesiehest Hierusalem
weallas blican and hiera winrod lixan
soðfæstra segn. Saga hwæt ic mæne. (Solomon and Saturn 230-7)

(What is the silent thing that rests in a valley, is very wise, and has seven tongues? Each of the tongues has twenty points; each point has the wisdom of an angel, [and] each one of them wishes to bring [you] up so that you shall there see the golden walls of Jerusalem shining, and their joy-rood

gleaming, sign of the righteous. Say what I mean.)

Several metrical Old Saxonisms appear in this plainly riddling passage: three unstressed syllables preceding a finite verb (234a); a long Sxxxs foot (232a); and type xD (236b). Solomon's ready answer to Saturn's question, 'books' (238a), however, fails to disclose how he solved the riddle, although the answer seems clear: the books in question make use of an alphabet of seven vowels (*vocales*, which have a voice or 'tongue' in their own right) and twenty consonants (which sound only when attached to one of the seven vowels).⁴³ Saturn's riddle thus seems to be an analogue to Aldhelm's Latin riddle 30, which is discussed both by O'Brien O'Keeffe (*Visible Song* 52-4) and by Lees and Overing (56-8), although the Latin alphabet referenced by Aldhelm has only twenty-three letters. It is, of course, the Old English alphabet that has seven vowels (*a, æ, e, i, o, u, and y*) and twenty consonants (*b, c, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, w, x, z, þ, and ð*). Despite its metrical affiliations with old Saxon verse, then, *Solomon and Saturn* seems clearly to be written from an Old English perspective, for only in Old English can Saturn's riddle be solved.⁴⁴

While it remains true that the specific shared and unshared formulas seen in the Old English and old Saxon traditions can be most plausibly explained through a prehistory of oral-formulaic composition in both languages, the Alfredian poems considered here, I believe, demonstrate a thorough grounding in literacy and its ideologies. The specific interactions between Old English and old Saxon in terms of lexical, formulaic, and metrical influence can be best understood as occurring through the mediation of literacy, and the simple presence of formulas or repeated phrases (even if extensive) in Alfredian poems cannot be directly linked to a living late ninth-century oral-formulaic tradition, I think. The old Saxon influence in question seems likely to derive directly from *The Heliand* and the old Saxon *Genesis*, rather than from a wandering old Saxon oral poet. The implications of the pervasive literate orientation of these poems and their composition (as well as some additional support for it) are explored in the following section.

Unique Poetic Parallels and *The Metres of Boethius*:

Borrowing and Influence

The conclusion that all of the Alfredian poems under consideration were written, literate compositions and the method of tracing old Saxon influence used above (where unique verbal parallels were identified as borrowings, precisely because they show no evidence of having been widespread, shared Old English formulas) recalls the methods used and the conclusions reached by Andy Orchard in two recent essays focused primarily on Cynewulf, *Andreas*, and *Judith* ('Style and Substance' and 'Computing Cynewulf'). In both essays, Orchard takes the works of Cynewulf as a single, coherent dataset, and he identifies unique or rare 'formulaic' parallels shared by the Cynewulfian poems and others. Orchard argues on the basis of these shared parallels that *Andreas* borrows from Cynewulf ('Style and Substance') and that *Judith* borrows from *Elene* ('Computing Cynewulf'). Specifically, Orchard's argument is that Cynewulf and the poets of both *Andreas* and *Judith* appear to have practised the very kind of literate formulaic composition technique that he had earlier described and addressed in the Anglo-Latin tradition in his *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*. Unique parallels, which are not attested otherwise in the surviving corpus, are the clearest potential evidence of direct borrowing from such a perspective.

In both essays, it is important to note, Orchard also considers parallels shared between the works of Cynewulf and *either one or two* other poems in the corpus as represented in the ASPR. The parallels shared among three poems (or five or six, if we count the works of Cynewulf as separate poems), it seems to me, are much less certain to be illuminating, as they are all the more likely to represent unusual but nevertheless truly formulaic constructions (that is, ones that are 'regularly employed'), possibly drawn from their general currency, rather than from a specific source. Here (and elsewhere in this book), therefore, I will limit my consideration to unique parallels, for which only three explanations are possible: such parallels may represent truly independent composition; they may be truly formulaic examples, understood to have a wider currency, but that are by chance preserved nowhere else; or else they may be direct or indirect (literate) borrowings. A consideration of unique parallels has the potential to reveal much about the compositional methods of an

Old English poet, if the data are sufficient to identify which of the three possibilities is most likely.

The very length of *The Meters of Boethius* makes it a convenient body of Alfredian-era work to use to try to sort out these possibilities. It is useful to consider a single example as a test case for examining the central questions, and the lone verse from the Alfredian period to use trisyllabic ‘ungemet’ outside of a Type A verse is an effective choice, because it has potentially formulaic parallels in exactly one poem, as [Table 2.5](#) shows.

Part of the interest in the verses listed in [Table 2.5](#) is precisely the metrical difficulty of understanding their structure. Bliss, for example, classifies the *Beowulf* verses as unscannable remainders, although suggesting that ‘they do belong to a type of some kind, and are not merely corrupt’ (*Metre* 78). The proper scansion of the *Beowulf* verses, it appears, is Sx/(x)Ss (with resolution of ‘-mete-’), which is no doubt unusual, but such a scansion accounts for the verses quite well enough.⁴⁵ Importantly, this scansion would seem to be less viable for the *Meters* verse, since the use of ‘ungemet’ elsewhere in Alfredian verse always indicates stress on ‘un-’ rather than ‘-met-.’ The *Meters* verse, it seems, should probably be scanned as Type D (S/Sxxs), unless we wish to assume that the word was variably stressed by the *Meters* poet in order to maintain continuity with the scansion and stressing of the *Beowulf* verses.

Table 2.5 Forms of ‘Ungemet’ between Metrical Monosyllables

<i>Meters</i> 59b	ungemet cald
<i>Beowulf</i> 1792b	metes wel
<i>Beowulf</i> 2420b	mete neah
<i>Beowulf</i> 2721b	mete till
<i>Beowulf</i> 2728b	mete neah

Yet the very unusualness of the scansion of the *Beowulf* verses makes the possibility that this type of verse was ever a widespread or shared formula remote: it rather seems to have the character of an idiosyncratic usage of the *Beowulf* poet alone, one so far outside the norm of traditional poetic expression that its scansion has been a puzzle for modern metricists. The possibility that the *Meters* poet composed this verse through access to the oral-formulaic tradition thus seems equally remote: if such verses

had been common in such a tradition, they would have been generated with some frequency and their scansion would probably be clearer. It is at least possible that the *Meters* example is an independent composition, but I incline rather to the third possibility: that the *Meters* verse is composed with the *Beowulf* verses in mind, precisely through a misunderstanding of the *Beowulf* verses' metre. In addition, it may well be the case that the *Meters* poet's occasional spelling of this word with '-ig' may also be the result of a Beowulfian solecism picked up and repeated by the *Meters* poet: forms with the rare spelling 'unigmet-' appear in Old English only in *Beowulf* 1792a and in *Meter* 7 33b and *Meter* 10 9b.⁴⁶ Again, however, a single example can probably not make the case sufficiently strong. But the possibility that the *Meters* poet composes verses through a literate mode would mesh well with his or her use of old Saxon models as well, and the remainder of this section will explore the evidence of unique parallels between *The Meters of Boethius* and poems that are likely to have preceded them, in order to draw what conclusions we can about the *Meters* poet's methods.⁴⁷

Given my discussion of 'weder ungemet cald,' it is useful to begin by considering unique parallels shared only by *The Meters of Boethius* and *Beowulf*, in order to assess more fully the potential relationship between them. Table 2.6 presents the relevant data.

In Table 2.6, items marked with asterisks are those verses from *The Meters* for which the prose source does not provide any part of the lexical content. But even when the prose source does relate to the actual verse, the parallel with *Beowulf* sometimes seems significant: in *Meter* 14, line 11, 'hordgestreona ðonne he hiðe r brohte,' we see only 'ponne he brohte hider' in the prose source; the addition of the word 'hordgestreona' and the lexical rearrangement (to allow 'hider' to alliterate) involves a specific change from the prose source that may well have been influenced by the Beowulfian alliterative pairing.

Other specific parallels are probably worth discussing. In the first line, 'wealaf' appears in the ASPR only in *Beowulf* and in this line from *The Meters*; the word itself is conspicuously rare, as well as its alliterative collocation with 'wige.'⁴⁸ In the last example, 'liðman' and 'lidman' are also paralleled later in *Maldon* ('lidmen' 99a; 'lidmanna' 164b) and 'liðsmen' is used in annal 1036 of the E Chronicle, but the word is not otherwise attested.⁴⁹ Likewise,

‘shiphere’ and ‘iumonna’ appear nowhere else in old English verse, although both have some presence in prose: ‘sciphere’ primarily in the *Chronicle* and Alfredian prose; ‘iumonna’ in only one gloss and in the prose life of Guthlac.⁵⁰ As half-lines or potentially formulaic collocations, ‘heardra hynða,’ ‘hreoh sefa,’ ‘rices wyrðran,’ and ‘huses hirde’ are found nowhere else in Old English verse; ‘folces hyrde’ itself is found only in *The Meters*, *Beowulf*, and the probably-Alfredian *Finnsburh* fragment (although the alliterative link with ‘fæstræd’ is shared only between *Beowulf* and *The Meters*).⁵¹ Note also that the three full-line parallels stand out as especially clear indicators of the possibility of a direct relationship between the poems in question.

Table 2.6 Parallels Shared Uniquely by *Beowulf* and *The Meters* of Boethius

Beowulf	Finnsburh	Analogue
10B41:22þ Newnablic þage forþan fange	10B41:22þ Newnablic þage forþan fange	forstandan
30F21a:28h giongolh gestrion	30F21a:28h giongolh gestrion	
26F05:57æ gemunde ð þ æra æra	26F05:57æ gemunde ð þ æra æra	a
2M80b:71æs Wæs hira hreofa sefa	2M80b:71æs Wæs hira hreofa sefa	
Me74:6swæartan niht	Me74:6swæartan niht	b
86Me4:45es wigeð wyrðran	86Me4:45es wigeð wyrðran	
16F67a:22a se hyl 313a: huses hirde	16F67a:22a se hyl 313a: huses hirde	
24B38:31h seiphergenbe sciphergas	24B38:31h seiphergenbe sciphergas	c
Me010:49es hyrde fæstræd folcopoltr de	Me010:49es hyrde fæstræd folcopoltr de	d
Me92b:59æt wælgmæges mek cald	Me92b:59æt wælgmæges mek cald	e
16F67a:22a se hyl 313a: huses hirde	16F67a:22a se hyl 313a: huses hirde	
30F24:4hirdges gestre hinc ð outre	30F24:4hirdges gestre hinc ð outre	
he hiðer brohte	he hiðer brohte	g
16F226:63hralðan beha frean	16F226:63hralðan beha frean	

a. Note that ‘gemunde para eðnessa’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 54). I cite parallels between the prose and verse portions of Boethius from Griffiths to facilitate readers’ own comparisons, since Griffiths’s edition conveniently prints both versions on the same pages.

b. The same words are used later in *JDay II* 199b in Type B; see also *ChristC* 872a, ‘on sweartre niht.’ Note that ‘sweartan niht’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 58).

- c. Note that ‘sciphere’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 69).
- d. Note that ‘7 fæstræda’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 76).
- e. Note that ‘ceald’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 80).
- f. See also *Beo* 2420b, 2721b, and 2728b.
- g. Note that ‘bonne he brohte hider’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 89).

It is worth reiterating, of course, that the data presented in [Table 2.6](#) do not represent the full extent of the parallels between *The Meters of Boethius* and *Beowulf*. [Table 2.6](#) shows only those parallels that are not shared by any other poems in the corpus. Given that the parallels listed include not only rare verses and alliterative collocations but also words that occur with notable rarity in all surviving Old English prose and verse, the possibility of independent composition begins to seem as unlikely as the possibility of access to a shared (oral-) formulaic system. The number of examples, as well as their occasionally quite unusual nature, most strongly supports the hypothesis of direct, literate, poetic borrowing.

The direction of that borrowing, of course, needs to be determined, especially since some recent arguments (articulated most fully in Kevin Kiernan’s *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*) have seen *Beowulf* as at least roughly contemporary with its surviving manuscript, and thus to be dated a century or so after Alfred. If this late date is correct, then we would be obliged to conclude that *Beowulf* derives its portion of [Table 2.6](#) directly from *The Meters*, as there is no other evidence that such verses ever stood as widespread or current formulas. However, given my analysis of *Meter 11* 59b, ‘weder ungemet cald,’ it seems to me to be the case that the influence is far more likely to move from *Beowulf* to *The Meters*. Indeed, the general metrical conservatism throughout *Beowulf* in comparison to *The Meters* supports a more archaic *Beowulf* (although such conservatism probably cannot clinch the case on its own). Such a conclusion, of course, sits well with much recent work: R.D. Fulk dates *Beowulf* as ‘after ca. 725 if Mercian, or after ca. 825 if Northumbrian’ (390), while Michael Lapidge concludes that there existed ‘an early-eighth-century archetype in Anglo-Saxon set miniscule’ (‘Archetype’ 41). Both studies clearly indicate a date well before Alfred’s reign; I believe

the evidence presented here supports an eighth- or ninth-century date as well. To put it into other terms, it appears that the evidence of probable borrowing supplements the linguistic, metrical, and palaeographic arguments that place *Beowulf*'s composition well before Alfred's time, and when multiple, independent arguments begin to point in the same direction, the resulting consensus takes on special importance.

The likelihood that *The Meters* borrows from *Beowulf*, rather than the other way around, is supported, in fact, by the degree to which *The Meters* also shows rare and unique parallels with a restricted set of surviving Old English poems, as indicated in [Table 2.7](#). In general, these other poems have usually also been identified on independent grounds as likely to predate Alfred's reign.

[Table 2.7](#) shows many unique parallels involving rare words, half-line structures, rare alliterative linkages across the caesura, and full line structures. But it is the sheer number of unique parallels here that we should find surprising, especially if we add the thirteen unique parallels identified as shared between *Beowulf* and *The Meters* in [Table 2.6](#) to the forty-six parallels listed in [Table 2.7](#). Specifically, it is important to observe that if I had employed Orchard's technique of treating the signed Cynewulfian poems as a single source, the number of 'unique' parallels would undoubtedly be significantly higher. Of the fifty-one unique parallels identified by Orchard as shared between the four signed Cynewulf poems and other poems, only seventeen (one third of the total) would be counted as unique parallels according to my method ('Style and Substance' 278-87).⁵² Further, Orchard's seventeen unique parallels rarely link the same two poems, except for three unique parallels shared by *Andreas* and *Elene* and two shared by *Elene* and *Genesis A*.⁵³ Here we can see that *The Meters* shows thirteen unique parallels with *Beowulf*, eight with *Elene*, eight also with *Genesis A*, five with *Andreas*, and four with *Juliana*. Since *The Meters* totals around 1800 lines of verse (comparing closely with *Andreas*'s 1722), the evidence for *The Meters* poet's direct reliance on these five poems appears to be even stronger than Orchard's evidence for a relation of dependence between *Andreas* and Cynewulf. Further, we can easily understand the three unique parallels shared by *The Meters* and *Solomon and Saturn* as being derived from the origins of both

at or near Alfred's court; the three parallels shared with *Exodus* seem also to express direct dependence, especially as *Exodus*'s parallels to the *Proem* to *The Meters* occupy three consecutive verses.

Table 2.7 Unique Parallels between *The Meters* and ASPR Poems Other than *Beowulf* and *Genesis B*_a

Metric	Parallel(s) (in ASPR order)
<i>Glaf</i> A1136	þeopoldondnig
<i>Met</i> A12582	þæt hie firendes afterfrene waardon
<i>Met</i> A1258	annde bearns wæde
<i>Met</i> A1265	l: bneare gesettan
<i>Glaf</i> A12173	b: mearce healdan
<i>Glaf</i> A1954	a: fæder æt fyrmðe
<i>Met</i> A717	a: bet þæt tradda wære
<i>Glaf</i> A2073	b: l: 88 g: h: 259 w: dægimnes worn
<i>EM</i> 407	berforðcufolgetæg, ræd
<i>EM</i> 77	Þneðe ðlun healdum secgean.
	Hehtas þowille! _h
<i>Met</i> 535	a: gteorne weard
<i>Met</i> 970	a: mearca and mearcður _k
<i>AMet</i> 6184	a: l: 26 b: g: steams stefne
<i>Met</i> 318	a: s: g: g: geswæced _m
<i>AMet</i> 8830	a: of faran g: l: l: l: d
<i>Met</i> 1778	7: þæt is god god
	ealra geseafra _a
<i>Met</i> 2698	b: þæt ðys dny dny fraftum _q
<i>Met</i> 466	a: i: g: l: l: d 4a: singallice _r
<i>EMet</i> 29	: 3a: Romawynning
<i>EMet</i> 308	2: 6: s: Eala, siigora god
<i>Met</i> 905	: 4: g: l: g: g: g: g: d
<i>EMet</i> 023	4: b: i: Met 25: 6: m: d: g: m: c: y: n: n: u: m
<i>EMet</i> 420	: 1: 6: 4: b: e: h: y: d: g: s: h: i: n: d: p: y: c: l: e: n: e: p: i: d: e: r
<i>EMet</i> 326	: 2: e: f: e: p: u: l: o: f: e: n: f: i: f: e: l: s: t: e: g: a: m
	famig b: c: l: d: a: n
<i>Met</i> 634	: 2: 7: a: n: d: w: a: t: e: r: i: g: t: e: r: g: e: s: i: m
<i>Met</i> 473	: 2: 8: 2: a: r: m: e: a: n: d: e: a: n: w: a: r: e
<i>JMet</i> 58	: 4: 1: 8: 4: p: a: t: s: e: a: d: e: n: w: e: a: n: d
<i>Met</i> 1	: 0: 0: a: n: s: o: u: l: d: e: b: e: g: u: n: s: y: m: b: s: e: a: l: d

~~Met1B 4258~~and geseftestype
~~Met1B 404a~~Met25a5He cyndgecynde^z
~~Met1B 39a~~: goldes and gimma^{aa}
~~Met20 99b~~blowæð and gromæð^{bb}
~~Met22 293a~~haðor huf of ontungol
~~Met20 64a~~eall dū wita^{cc}
~~Met29 42b~~sefaingn be hylgd
~~Met26 25a~~wilne hængestangest
~~Met26 174b~~in þih hinessinla^{ee}
~~Met22 46b~~so gung gelunden^{ee}
~~Met28 107a~~te lān dī fyretgeornra
~~Jul 399b~~: eal geondwite^{gg}
 *Met30 15b: eall geondwiteð
~~Met28 30a~~graglesghylutshluttur
~~Met28 20: 28b~~in þohim þearf þa^{ff} sie
~~Met13 498b~~Fall dofe nieowæ geðgeornra
~~Met25 92b~~: mirc heate wætwigað^{kk}
~~Met22 222: 22b~~ysgað on deofa
 mænna gelyfes^{lcs}
~~Met20 81b~~wiridde gēblōden

- a. As noted before, I again leave out of consideration potentially parallel verses from later poems including *The Metrical Psalms*, the *Chronicle* poems, *The Judgment Day II*, *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, *The Menologium*, *Maldon*, and *Seasons for Fasting*. And again, items marked with asterisks are those verses from *The Meters* for which the prose source does not provide any part of the lexical content.
- b. Note that ‘fyrenlustes’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 68).
- c. Note that ‘triowa sceadum’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 69).
- d. Compare *Met20* 89a, ‘mearce geseftest.’ Note that ‘mearce gesette’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 89).
- e. Note that ‘buton anweorce’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 93).
- f. Note that *Met26* 33a is ‘dohtor wunode’ and *GenA* 2599b is ‘and his dohtor twa’; the alliterative linkage of ‘dægriðes worn’ and ‘dohtor’ may be significant.

- g. 'Folccuð' also appears in *Met*26 9b; it is attested nowhere else in Old English.
- h. Note that 'ræd' immediately precedes the repeated full line in both *Ex* 6b and *MetProem* 9b.
- i. Note that 'geortrywe' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 62).
- j. Note that 'man' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 71).
- k. In other verse types, 'man' and 'morðor' are collocated in *El* 626a, 941a, and *And* 1313a.
- l. Note that 'woruldsorga' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 57).
- m. Compare *GuthB* 1137a, 'sarum geswenced.'
- n. Compare *Rid3* 22a, 'eara geblonden'; note the later use of a similar verse in *Brun* 26b, 'oferæra gebland.'
- o. Note that 'an God is fæder eallra gesceafta' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 93).
- p. Compare Wulfsgie's *GDPref* 15, to be discussed further below, 'an ece god eallra gesceafta.'
- q. Note that 'drycraeft' is also used in *Met*26 54a and 102a; otherwise it appears only in prose, including twice in the prose source to *Meter* 26.
- r. Note that 'singallice' appears in the prose source of *Meter* 7, but not *Meter* 11 (Griffiths 66, 78).
- s. Note that 'sigora god' is also used later in *Seasons* 14a and *Instr* 202a, but the phrase appears nowhere else in Old English (DOE online corpus proximity search, 'sigora' and 'god').
- t. Note that 'gimmum geglenged' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 90).
- u. The Vercelli manuscript reads 'gelenged'; note that *Elene* 90 alliteratively links 'golde ge[g]lenged' to 'gimmas.'
- v. Note that 'wintra' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 137).
- w. Note that 'earme eorpan' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 60).
- x. Note that 'sondbeorhas' appears in the prose source (Griffiths 65).
- y. Compare *Met*11 82a, 93a. 'Gefer' appears in the prose source of

Met11 47a.

- z. Note that ‘gecynde’ appears in the prose source for both *Meters* examples (Griffiths 86, 126).
- aa. Note that ‘gimcynnes’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 89).
- bb. Note that ‘grewð 7 blewð’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 104). Compare Sisam’s comment that ‘the epilogue [to Alfred’s *Pastoral Care*] contains two other examples, 469/4 and 469/6 *tofloweð*, both required by the metre. In the whole prose text H and C (where it is available) have only short forms, four of *toflowð*, three of the parallel *grewð* (‘Dialect Origins’ 125), suggesting that this particular metrical change was elsewhere controlled in Alfredian-era poetry in a directly similar fashion.
- cc. Note that ‘uðwita’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 117).
- dd. Note that ‘ingehygd’ is also used in Wulfsgie’s *GDPref* 9b.
- ee. Note that ‘sorgiende’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 132).
- ff. Note that ‘firwetgeorne’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 139).
- gg. Note that ‘geondwlitan’ is also used in *Sat* 9b, *ChristA* 60b, and *Phoen* 211a, but nowhere else is it collocated with ‘eal’ in the ASPR. The verb is used nowhere else in Old English (DOE online corpus search, ‘geondwli-’).
- hh. ‘Glæshlutru’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 61); besides these three spots, it is used nowhere else in Old English.
- ii. Only the West Saxon version of *Bede’s Death Song* uses the disyllabic ‘þonne’ (for ‘than’/’ðon’ in the other versions); although the West Saxon version of *Bede’s Death Song* is not preserved in a manuscript earlier than the twelfth century, the parallels seen here suggest that it likely goes back to an Alfredian or earlier West Saxon version. Note that the phrase ‘ðonne [pronoun] ðearf sie’ has some frequency in prose (DOE online ordered proximity searches: ‘-onne-,’ ‘-earf-,’ and ‘sy-’/’sie-’).
- jj. Note that ‘heregeatwum’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 124).
- kk. Note that ‘heregeatu’ is later used in *Mald* 48a.

- II. Note that ‘mod’ appears in the prose source (Griffiths 147). Of course, as discussed above, this example could represent direct borrowing into *The Meters* from *The Heliand*.

It is impossible to discuss every one of these examples in detail, but two main points need to be made on the basis of [Table 2.7](#). First, the parallels for which the prose of the Boethius provided no lexical content are fairly widely distributed, with the general exception of the Exeter poems. Although there are fifteen unique parallels with Exeter poems, only six of them are independent of the Boethian prose, five of those six falling in only two poems: *Juliana* and *Christ II*, the two Exeter works by Cynewulf. The evidence for potential knowledge of Exeter poems other than *Juliana* and *Christ II* is especially weak, since most of the parallels could have been prompted by the prose source. This observation is supported by my second point about the unique parallels identified in [Tables 2.6](#) and [2.7](#): we can conclude that the *Meters* poet did not simply compose the relevant verses independently. If the relevant verses had been composed independently by the *Meters* poet (either through access to an oral tradition or other means) we would expect unique parallels to appear with similar frequencies in all of the longer poetic works, because all such parallels would then result from mere random chance. [Table 2.8](#) shows how far the data in [Tables 2.6](#) and [2.7](#) are from such a scenario.

As [Table 2.8](#) suggests, these longer poems actually fall into two quite distinct groups. One group (including *Daniel*, *Christ and Satan*, *Fates of the Apostles*, and all of the Exeter poems except *Juliana*) includes poems that show only one or zero unique parallels with *The Meters*. This group includes twelve unique parallels in 8,817 lines: about 1.4 unique parallels per thousand lines. The second group, each poem of which includes multiple unique parallels, totals 10,987 lines and forty-seven unique parallels, which is 4.3 parallels per thousand lines – three times the frequency of the other group. Since these groups are both large and roughly similar in size, this distribution is unlikely to be a random statistical fluctuation. The conclusion that the *Meters* poet makes little or no direct use of *Daniel*, *Christ and Satan*, and the non-Cynewulf Exeter poems seems unavoidable; the likelihood is that these poems were unknown to the *Meters* poet.

The evidence for knowledge of *Christ II* and *Fates of the Apostles*, it should be pointed out, is also minimal.

In the end, [Tables 2.6](#), [2.7](#), and [2.8](#) combine to suggest that there is substantial evidence to support the possibility that the *Meters* poet knew *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, *Andreas*, *Elene*, *Juliana*, *Beowulf*, and *Solomon and Saturn* (and the Old Saxon influence addressed above implies knowledge of *The Heliand* as well). By contrast, the non-Cynewulfian Exeter poems (as well as *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*) appear not to have served as a source of verses or rare words for the *Meters* poet. The unique parallels to non-Cynewulfian Exeter poems are different in both kind (by being more likely to derive from the prose Boethius) and frequency from the parallels to these other poems, and those differences are better explained by lack of access to the Exeter collection than by the hypothesis of independent composition of all the lines and half-lines in [Tables 2.6](#) and [2.7](#).

That the list of poems probably known to the *Meters* poet should include *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, and *Solomon and Saturn*, of course, should be utterly unsurprising, because the translation of *Genesis B* was presumably prompted by a lacuna in *Genesis A*:⁵⁴ thus all three of these poems can plausibly be placed in Alfred’s court on grounds other than their unique parallels. Indeed, the fact that the unique-parallel analysis identifies the *Genesis* poems and *Solomon and Saturn* as located in an Alfredian milieu should be seen as justifying the method, as these poems have been otherwise attributed to an Alfredian context on completely separate grounds. The presumed dates for *Andreas*, the poems of Cynewulf, and *Exodus* also make it perfectly plausible to suppose they might have been read at Alfred’s court.⁵⁵ Since for the *Genesis* poems and *Solomon and Saturn*, at least, the unique parallels provide support to the other evidence of a shared location in time and space, the unique parallels between *The Meters* and *Beowulf*, *Elene*, *Exodus*, and *Andreas* are thus likely to indicate the same kind of relationship.

Table 2.8 Relative Frequency of Unique Parallels between *The Meters* and Other ASPR Poems

Number of Poems	Number of Parallels
Non-Cynewulf Exeter	

	2489
st 1	1
st III	1008
lac A	1011
lac B	1011
Phoenix	1017
ter poems	3462
Exeter Total	6055
Cynewulf	
	5821
ana	5431
st II	2427
	6022
Cynewulf Total	1091
Beowulf	1381
And	1702
Solomon and Saturn	5806
Junius	
sis A	2340
sis B	6017
us	5360
æl	1011
and Satan	1129

The evidence from unique poetic parallels between *The Meters of Boethius* and these other poems is especially significant given the composition of *The Meters* in a literate mode. In short, a process of composition that uses pre-existing texts as a database that can be mined and sifted for useful words, verses, and expressions functions differently from an oral-formulaic process. The method that operates through literacy, it is important to understand, is probably incapable of distinguishing between a true oral-formulaic formula (which is, by definition, ‘regularly employed’ and generated by a poet’s internalized metrical grammar), on the one hand, and a poetic solecism or nonce-composition, on the other. A literate poet borrowing the phraseology of a written text will lift both common, repeated ‘formulas’ and rare, idiosyncratic phrases or structures (like ‘Geat unigm-etes wel’) with equal facility. Thus, while the presence of similar verses in *The Meters* and, say, *Beowulf* might simplistically be seen as evidence that both were composed in a mode that

shares real affinities with oral-formulaic composition, the nature and frequency of the unique parallels collected in [Tables 2.6 and 2.7](#) (especially when combined with all the various arguments for the literate composition of *The Meters*) powerfully suggests the literate, ‘data-mining’ method.

But if that is the case, the analysis of unique parallels conducted here really does suggest that the *Meters* poet must have known not only *The Heliand* and *Genesis B*, but *Genesis A*, *Exodus*, *Beowulf*, *Elene*, *Andreas*, and *Juliana* as well. This analysis not only suggests an interesting conclusion about the compositional methods of this author, but a range of poems for which he or she was an audience as well. The possibility that this author worked at Alfred’s court can also, as it turns out, be tested by conducting a similar analysis of unique parallels in two of the shortest Alfredian poems: the Alfredian *Metrical Prefaces*.

The Metrical Prefaces and Unique Parallels

By way of confirmation that these poems (*Beowulf*, *Genesis A* and *B*, *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and the Cynwulfian poems *Elene*, *Juliana*, and possibly *Christ II*) were known to Alfred’s circle and the poets working within it, it is useful to perform a similar search for unique parallels among the verses from Alfred’s and Wulfsgie’s respective *Metrical Prefaces*. The results of just such a search are presented in [Table 2.9](#).

The total number of lines available in these two brief poems is much smaller, making the number of unique parallels especially notable: both poets use a surprising number of specific expressions that are truly rare within the tradition at large. As the close parallels presented in [Table 2.9](#) suggest, both poets presumably knew *Genesis B* (or the Old Saxon *Genesis*), and the two poems together show parallels with the Cynewulfian poems *Christ II*, *Elene* and *Juliana*. Wulfsgie’s *Metrical Preface* seems to show an especially clear debt to *Andreas*, with two unique full-line parallels as well as a unique half-line parallel. In neither poem is the parallel to *Beowulf* especially revealing, but the important result here is that the poems sharing unique parallels with the two *Metrical Prefaces* are the very ones most likely to have also influenced *The Meters of Boethius*.

The example of the full-line phrase ‘an ece god eallra gesceafta’

- a. Cf. also *Met*19 16a, ‘on sealtne sæ.’ In general, see also O’Brien O’Keeffe’s discussion of overlap between *The Metrical Preface* and *The Meters of Boethius* and the apparent chronology of the two works (*Visible Song* 87 n. 28).
- b. The verses cited are the only ones in the ASPR to link an Ss compound ending with ‘spell’ to ‘monig.’ O’Brien O’Keeffe (103 n. 11) lists additional formulas from the ‘[Ss-compound] + monig’ system in *GenA* 1766a; *MaxI* 15a, *Pan* 50b; *Ruin* 23a; *Beo* 776a; 838a, 1510b; *Met*1 3b; to these should be added those with ‘manig’: *GenA* 2207a; *And* 1549a, 1596a; *El* 258b; *Beo* 1015a, 1289b. This formula appears to be a common West-Germanic inheritance; see also *Heliand* 413a, 876b, 1288b, 1367b, 1703a, 1842b, 5565a. The frequency of the formula makes the close analogue in *El* 1016b less compelling than other examples.
- c. Compare *El* 382a and *And* 1165a, ‘on sefan snyttro.’ See O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 98 n. 4 for this pairing as a conventional collocation.
- d. Compare *Beo* 2430b, ‘Hreðel cyning’ and *Met*15 2a, ‘Neron cynincg’. When not associated with a proper name, the formula ‘Ss-compound + cyning’ is a shared West Germanic formula, found in *GenA* (192b, 241a, 1406b, etc.); *Ex* (9a, 390a); *Dan* (100a, 135a, 161b, etc.); *Fates* (69a); *El* (152a, 158a, 195a), *Az* (99b 133b148b); *Jul* (4a); *fles* (14b); *Beo* (619b, 1925b, 2110b, 2417b); *Jud* (190a); *Finn* (2a); *Hel* 630b, 703a. There is one unambiguous example in a tenth-century poem: *Capt* 13b. Because Ss is a typical form for compound Germanic proper names, the ‘Ss-name + cyning’ formula might well have been more widespread in other no-longer-surviving heroic verse. For scanning uninflected Germanic compound names as Ss, see my ‘Secondary Stress’ essay.
- e. This line is cited from the edition of the poem by Yerkes, which supersedes the ASPR edition here.
- f. Compare ‘x + findan + modal’ in Type B: *And* 980b, 1154b; *El* 924b.
- g. Compare *Met*25 42b, ‘sefan ingehygd.’
- h. Compare *And* 3b, ‘No hira þrym alæg.’ I have found no other examples of an Old English ‘x + þrym + finite verb’ in Type B

formulaic system.

- i. Compare *And* 703, ‘an ece god eallra gesceafta,’ and *And* 1717, ‘An is ece god eallra gesceafta.’

Conclusions

Although Asser never explicitly describes King Alfred as such, it seems likely that Alfred was a book collector nevertheless. The story Asser tells of the brotherly contest over the book of songs would seem to confirm it: although it is the beauty of the initial letter that Asser focuses our attention upon, the physical book is Alfred’s prize, not the knowledge of the song or songs it contains. Later in life, when the prose preface to the *Pastoral Care* was written, Alfred still equated books and treasures, although now apparently valuing the wisdom they contained over their physical existence as things. The value of the æstels attached to the copies of *The Pastoral Care* announces how highly he valued the contents of a book like Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 20, whose modest textual adornments would surely have never much attracted the boyhood Alfred. And Alfred’s very desire to provide his bishops with books presumably reflects his own eager acquisition of them.⁵⁷

One of my purposes in the chapter has simply been to try to see what sorts of ‘books of Saxon songs’ might have belonged in Alfred’s hypothetical collection. The ‘formulaic’ influences I have traced here from Old Saxon (along with the fact of the translation of *Genesis B* and the tenth-century presence in England of a *Heliand* manuscript that could be copied into London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. vii) make it very likely that Alfred’s books included both *The Heliand* and the Old Saxon *Genesis*. This conclusion meshes very well with the metrical, linguistic, and contextual evidence for dating *Genesis B*, *Solomon and Saturn*, and the *Metrical Prefaces* of both *The Pastoral Care* and *Wærferth’s Translation of Gregory’s Dialogues* to the late ninth century, which (in turn) makes it likely that Alfred’s books also contained *Finnsburh* and *The Dream of the Rood*, for these poems also show especially dense concentrations of metrical Old Saxonisms. The translation of *Genesis B*, again, presumably implies Alfredian knowledge of *Genesis A*. Strikingly, the evidence of unique poetic parallels discussed in this chapter demonstrates with high

probability that the *Meters* poet, Wulfsgige, and the author of *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* did, in fact, have access to *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *The Heliand*, and *Solomon and Saturn* - all poems that have been shown on independent grounds (metre, language, contextual aptness, or a combination of all three) to have a high probability of an Alfredian presence. This observation should not be passed over too quickly: in the case of these poems in particular, my reassessment of seemingly 'formulaic' parallels as direct borrowings merely confirms the presence of these poems in the Alfredian milieu, a presence that can be (and has been) argued on completely independent grounds.

The significance of this argument from unique parallels, then, lies in its ability to pinpoint other poems with a strong claim to have been known and read at Alfred's court, specifically *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Beowulf*, as well as the works of Cynewulf. *Bede's Death Song* also seems likely to have been known in its West Saxon version. Of equal importance is the fact that unique parallels between the *Meters* or the *Metrical Prefaces* and the non-Cynewulfian Exeter poems are so infrequent and unimpressive as to suggest no knowledge of those other Exeter poems at Alfred's court. Though Alfred may have collected an impressive library of poetry, most of the Exeter poems seem to have escaped his collector's grasp.

Of course, virtually all of the poems other than the very brief *Bede's Death Song* that we can tentatively identify as among Alfred's collected treasures belong to the 'anonymous' tradition of Old English verse, where even if a name is associated with the works (as in the case of Cynewulf), it does not serve the function of authorizing the text within the economy of value that applies in the 'authorial tradition.' Yet Alfred himself served powerfully as an authorizing author in his role as nominal translator or commissioner of prose works and in the verse works associated so closely with them, including *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care*, *The Metrical Preface to Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues*, and *The Meters of Boethius*. All of these poems clearly mobilize Alfred's very apparent literary and cultural authority. It may be no mere coincidence that these works, which so powerfully invoke the figure of the authorizing author (whether Alfred in his own right or Wulfsgige via Alfred) also seem to be characterized by a highly textual mode of composition, in which

specific verses and lines appear to derive not from a general and shared stock of formulaic expression, but rather from specific and (at least potentially) identifiable sources. In terms of this shift to the textually oriented, authority-driven poetic tradition, it is important to recall the degree to which these Alfredian-era poems were associated with the world of Latin learning and the notions of authorial authorization and authority that were current in that world. Alfred's *Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care*, we must recall, explicitly bridged the gap between English and Latin through its construction of a metaphorical genealogy of authorship and transmission, spanning from Gregory to Augustine to Alfred, even as it seemed also to borrow the conceit of the 'speaking object' from the inscriptional tradition.

In bringing this concept of authority and authorship to Old English verse, Alfred finally made real the potential adumbrated in Bede's story of Cædmon. While Bede's Latin was seemingly obliged to displace the English of *Cædmon's Hymn* to the margins, *The Meters of Boethius* reversed that dynamic, with the Old English *Meters* ultimately displacing their Latin originals entirely. But it seems to have taken the authority of the king to complete the process, and for Alfred at least, the Anglicizing of Latin literature and culture exemplified in his translation program was ironically accompanied by the adoption of an author- and authority-based (and explicitly literate) mode of poetic composition and expression that was itself most closely associated with Latin literature.⁵⁸ It was not the death knell for the 'anonymous' tradition of Old English verse, which clearly continued, during and after Alfred's reign, but it was indeed a transformation – and one that, a century later, would find its fullest realization in the writings of Ælfric.

3 Literate Poetic Composition in Tenth-Century Classical Poems

The earliest tenth-century Old English poem to survive in a contemporary manuscript can probably be found in St Petersburg, Russian National Library O. v. XVI. 1.¹ This manuscript consists of sixteen leaves, mostly taken up by a Latin grammatical treatise (identified by Gneuss, *Handlist*, as Priscian's *Institutio de nomine, pronomine et verbo*) that was apparently copied in the first part of the tenth century (Ker, 'Supplement' 127). Folio 15r includes the following maxim:

A scæl gelæred smið, swa he gelicost mæg,
be bisne wyrcan, butan he bet cunne.

(adapted from Ker, 'Supplement' 127)

(The learned smith must always work as similarly as he can according to the exemplar, unless he knows [how to work] better.)²

As Joyce Hill has suggested, the 'smith' in the poetic maxim can be read as referring to a scribe: this maxim, she indicates, 'may be applied metaphorically to the written artefact' ('Authorial Identity' 189). The force of the proverb, of course, reminds us that Old English scribes often felt it was both reasonable and appropriate to improve or update the texts before them. But the method of literate poetic composition that I described above as operating through more or less direct borrowing of verses and poetic words also makes it possible to read the 'smið' of the St Petersburg maxim as a poet, one who cobbles together a new composition by modelling it closely on other poems at hand.

In this chapter, I trace the progress of this 'borrowing' method of literate composition that operated in Alfred's court as it continued to function throughout the tenth century. Specifically, the continued composition of much classical poetry during the tenth century can plainly be traced to this borrowing mode of

composition, even while poems in the late Old English verse style exemplified by *The Metrical Psalms* were also being produced. A full analysis of the interrelationships between the classical verse of the tenth century and the developing late Old English verse tradition is impossible here, both because our understanding of late Old English verse remains underdeveloped and because detailed understanding of the writing of classical verse in the tenth century still escapes us. Working toward that latter understanding is the primary concern of this chapter.

It is important to begin with the fact that the tenth century produced a surprising number of classically metrical poems, although work remains to be done to locate most of them in identifiable historical contexts. As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has shown, for example, the translation of *Riddle 40* from its Aldhelmian source must have taken place in the tenth century, as it was probably directly translated from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C. 697 ('Exeter Riddle 40'), which probably did not arrive in England until the tenth century.³ Mechthild Gretsch has recently argued that a two-line poetic scholion in the Royal Psalter was probably composed by Æthelwold of Winchester, the architect of the Benedictine Reform sometime around mid-century (*Intellectual Foundations* 310).⁴ The four classical tenth-century *Chronicle* poems canonized in the ASPR were almost certainly composed between 950 and about 975. The use of a quotation from *The Metrical Psalms* within *The Menologium* indicates that the latter poem post-dates the transition to late Old English verse, and thus probably dates to the second half of the tenth century.⁵ And *The Battle of Maldon* was clearly composed after 991, but probably not long after. The very datability of these poems makes them especially important for our understanding of how classical Old English verse was understood and produced in the tenth century.

As the example of the relationship between *The Menologium* and *The Metrical Psalms* makes clear, non-classical, late Old English verse was also being produced by about the middle of the tenth century. One powerful example is the late charm *For the Water-Elf Disease* in the Royal collection of medical recipes, written in the same mid-century hand as Scribe 3 of the Parker Chronicle.⁶ *The Death of Edward II*, found in *Chronicle annals* 975DE is clearly in late Old English verse, and *An Exhortation to*

Christian Living must have been in existence in the middle of the century, because it was reused in Vercelli Homily XXI, and the date of the Vercelli Book is generally agreed to be the second half of the tenth century.⁷ In short, the tenth century appears to have featured both classical and late poetic forms; as such the tenth century is especially important for exploring the history of Old English poetry.

By analysing the metrical and alliterative practices and the borrowed expressions of a number of tenth-century classical poems, this chapter begins that historical work. Importantly, the use of the ‘borrowing’ method of composition in these tenth-century poems allows us to draw important conclusions about the likely contexts for some of these poems. For instance, I will suggest that a single individual was responsible for all four of the tenth-century *Chronicle* poems and that the same person may well have also written *The Menologium*. Further, the person in question was likely to have been either Æthelwold himself or someone from his school. The attribution, I will suggest, depends not only on the content and manuscript context of the poems in question, but upon the very evidence of the borrowings used in the poems themselves. Indeed, the ‘borrowing’ method of composition appears to interestingly echo the ‘glossary-searching’ techniques of composition usually associated with the hermeneutic Latin compositions of Æthelwold’s Winchester.

While the author of *Maldon* is virtually certain to remain anonymous, the *Maldon* poet’s use of borrowed and archaic poetic language does much to help locate him or her within the lingering tradition of classical Old English verse. The authorship of *Riddle 40*, by contrast, can be shown to have occurred within a separate local context, for which Dunstan’s Glastonbury is a strong candidate. An understanding of this continuing method of composition, as these conclusions suggest, has the potential to greatly clarify the post-Alfredian history of classical Old English verse.

The Authorship of *Riddle 40*

The case that O’Brien O’Keeffe makes for Rawlinson C. 697 as the proximate source for the translation of *Riddle 40* is compelling: this manuscript is the only surviving manuscript of Aldhelm’s

Enigma no. c from Anglo-Saxon England to have shifted lines 61-7 to a position before line 44, a shift which *Riddle 40* reflects. Further, O'Brien O'Keeffe links peculiarities and glosses present in the Rawlinson manuscript to details of the Old English version that make it unlikely that any other manuscript was the source. At the conclusion of her essay, O'Brien O'Keeffe offers the tantalizing possibility that 'further work on the English provenance of Rawlinson C. 697 may well throw light on the origin of the Exeter Book' ('Riddle 40' 73).

Just such further work on the textual and cultural associations of Rawlinson C. 697 has been attempted by Mechthild Gretsch, who traces the manuscript's history and apparent affiliations in some detail. Noting that the presence of 'the Æthelstan acrostic' suggests that Rawlinson C. 697 was 'connected with the royal household in the 920s and 930s' (*Intellectual Foundations* 369), Gretsch also notes that T.A.M. Bishop had identified one of the manuscript's annotating hands as that of Dunstan.⁸ Further, Gretsch notes links between Rawlinson C. 697; London, British Library, Royal 7 D. xxiv; and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183. The Royal and Corpus manuscripts, Gretsch suggests, were likely to have been written at Glastonbury, although (with admirable restraint) Gretsch offers no specific claim to localize Rawlinson C. 697 there. Indeed, if David Dumville's hypothesis that 'it is not imposible ... that Dunstan had started writing a hybrid Caroline miniscule in the period 956 × 958' (*Caroline Script* 51) is correct, Dunstan's hand would not appear in Rawlinson C. 697 until after he had departed from Glastonbury. Nevertheless, the fact that *Riddle 40* translates the capstone of Aldhelm's century of *Enigmata* (no. c) suggests a possible connection to the 'Aldhelm seminar' that Gretsch suspects was operative at Dunstan's Glastonbury. But even if Rawlinson C. 697 itself cannot be placed there with certainty, there may be reason to localize the composition of *Riddle 40* at Glastonbury on the basis of its poetic borrowings. It is useful, therefore, to turn to a consideration of the Old English poem.

Although ending imperfectly, the 107 surviving lines of *Riddle 40* are enough to at least attempt the sort of 'unique parallel' analysis undertaken for some Alfredian-era poems in the last chapter. As with *Genesis B* or *The Meters of Boethius*, the fact that *Riddle 40* is a close translation makes it plausible to suppose that

literate means were central to the Old English poem's composition. The results of the analysis are surprising, however, if only because relatively few of *Riddle 40*'s verses are repeated elsewhere in the poetic corpus. The following passage can help make clear how little overlap there is between much of *Riddle 40* and the rest of the ASPR:

Ʒeah Ʒe lilie sy Ʒeof moncynne
 beorht on blostman, ic eom betre Ʒonne heo;
 swylce ic nardes stenc nyde oferswiƷe
 mid minre swetnesse symle æghwær,
 ond ic fulre eom Ʒonne Ʒis fen swearte
 Ʒæt her yfle adelan stinceð. (27-32)

(Although the lily may be dear to mankind, bright in its blossoms, I am better than it; likewise I necessarily overpower the stench of the spikenard with my sweetness, always and everywhere, and I am fouler than this black fen that here evilly stinks of mud.)

Surprisingly, only one of these twelve verses has a clear claim to being formulaic: verse 30b, 'symle æghwær' appears in the same spelling in *Maxims I* 88b, and, with 'symble' for 'symle' twice in *Metrical Psalm* 88, verses 7.3b and 14.5b.⁹ None of the other verses from this passage have close parallels in the ASPR that might be considered borrowings or formulas, except perhaps for the possibility that a formulaic system places 'stenc' on the final stress of a B-type verse (cf. *Phoen* 81b; *Pan* 64b, 74b; *Whale* 54b, 65b). As natural as the pairings 'leof mancynne' and 'beorht on blostman' might seem to us, they are not otherwise recorded in Old English verse. Consequently, the actual number of unique parallels between *Riddle 40* and other ASPR poems shown in [Table 3.1](#) is especially significant.

Table 3.1 Unique Parallels between *Riddle 40* and Other ASPR Poems

<i>Riddle 40</i> 6b:	wordhte æt frymðe
<i>Riddle 40</i> 35b:	uttan ymbclyppeð
<i>Riddle 40</i> 39b:	bildstædagifeð
<i>Riddle 40</i> 44b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 45b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 46b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 47b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 48b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 49b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 50b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 51b:	puþurhið modor lhrif
<i>Riddle 40</i> 52b:	puþurhið modor lhrif

~~Rid40 93a: grund bihealden~~
~~Rid66 96a: þess þess hndhrum~~
~~Rid40 92a: se gas seandhrum~~
~~Rid70 103a: þess þess hndhrum~~

- a. Compare *Fates* 29a, ‘purh fæmnan hrif,’ and *PPs* 70.5 1a, ‘Ic of modur hrife,’ and *PPs* 138.11 5a, ‘of modur hrife.’
- b. Note that ‘handwurmes’ appears in *Metrical Charm 12*, line 12, in a portion of the charm lineated as prose by Dobbie, but in the phrase ‘miccli lesse als wa anes handwurmes hupeban’ (much less, like a hand-worm’s hip-bone). It would seem that this comparison was a conventional one for smallness.

Nine unique parallels might seem a small number, until we recall that I was able to identify only about sixty unique parallels to verses in *The Meters of Boethius*, a body of poetry about seventeen times as large: unique parallels appear in *Riddle 40* two and a half times as often. Further, a number of the parallels noted in [Table 3.1](#) involve unique collocations in Old English, not only in Old English verse, and despite their relatively small number, the range of poems sharing unique parallels with *Riddle 40* is strikingly different from the range of poems apparently available at Alfred’s court. I will consider the two unique parallels shared with *The Menologium* in the following section, but the two parallels with other *Riddles*, two parallels to *Christ I*, and even the parallels to *The Whale* and *Juliana* suggest that, unlike the Alfredian-era poets considered in [chapter 2](#), the composer of *Riddle 40* did have access to the works now found in the Exeter Book. It may be worth recalling that the prominence of parallels in *The Panther*, *The Whale*, *The Phoenix*, and *Maxims I* in the brief passage about various odours considered above: when *Riddle 40* shares rare or unusual diction and phrasing with other ASPR poems, it is most often with Exeter poems, and the lack of unique parallels to other poems hints that the author of *Riddle 40* may have had little or no access to any poems besides those now found in the Exeter Book. It cannot be mere coincidence that *Riddle 40*’s textual history places it amongst the Exeter collection and that its unique parallels suggest precisely that same context for its composition.

This observation is crucially important. Modern

understandings of the operation of an oral-formulaic mode in relation to Old English verse have generally conceptualized the entire range of surviving poetry as being representative of the tradition as it must have existed during the period.¹⁰ But the manifest differences in how verbal parallels link the Alfredian poems to one group of poems, while *Riddle 40* is similarly linked to a largely different set of poems cannot be ignored. Poetic composition in the late ninth and tenth centuries apparently involved separate traditions at this point, ones that we can trace on the basis of verbal parallels, and the *Riddle 40* author's access to a noticeably different range of poems (or poetic language) than that available to the *Meters* poet and Wulfsige not only confirms the existence of a literate process of composition that employs direct borrowing, but it helps to localize the translation of *Riddle 40* itself, which must have taken place at some centre where the poems available to Alfred were not available. If we were to remain committed to the idea that orality (in some guise) must account for verbal similarities in half-lines and diction, the analysis of unique parallels in *Riddle 40* nevertheless indicates that it was composed in a tradition distinct from that in which *The Meters* was composed. Although these traditions do not differ in metre, they differ in specific verses and diction, just as Old English and Old Saxon traditions differ in those areas. Given the difficulty of envisioning separate yet virtually simultaneous living oral traditions of Old English verse, it seems simplest once more to conclude that *Riddle 40* was composed in writing, making use of borrowings from poems already found in a collection much like what has come down to us in the Exeter Book.

The timing for the composition of *Riddle 40* is fairly clear, if less precise than we might wish; Gretsich notes that 'Rawlinson C. 697 was in England by the first part of the tenth century' (*Intellectual Foundations* 345), and that it 'was studied over an extended period in various important Anglo-Saxon libraries after it had travelled to England' (369). The Exeter Book itself is usually dated to the second half of the tenth century (Ker, *Catalogue* 153); Bernard J. Muir's edition suggests the copying occurred 'circa 965-75' (I, xv). So the composition of *Riddle 40* must have occurred around mid-century, and the place of composition must have been in some communication with wherever the exemplar or exemplars of the Exeter poetic

collection was housed. Although the case must remain, at this point, tentative, the evidence would seem to suggest that Glastonbury during Dunstan's abbacy (from 940 × 946 to perhaps 958) must be a strong candidate for that location.¹¹ Not only does the appearance of Dunstan's own hand in Rawlinson C. 697 suggest the possibility of localizing that manuscript in Glastonbury, but Gretsich's work suggests that there was a clear interest in Aldhelm's works there, and the scholars responsible for the Aldhelm glosses and the Royal Psalter gloss were (as Gretsich has compellingly argued) interested in and capable of using (and even coining) traditional or traditional-sounding Old English poetic compounds to represent the poetic and hermeneutic qualities of the texts they were glossing (*Intellectual Foundations*, chapters 4-6). Further, if Robert Butler's recent suggestion that the Exeter Book itself was copied at Glastonbury is correct, it offers the very real possibility that the poems now found in that manuscript were to be found in Glastonbury a generation earlier, in the 940s.

In making its case, Butler's essay usefully summarizes the biographical comments indicating that Dunstan was interested from an early age in 'old Saxon songs' including 'the idlest poems of ancestral paganism' (197 and the sources cited there). And as far as I can see, most of Patrick Conner's arguments for an Exeter origin for the Exeter Book would work just as well for a Glastonbury origin, especially as Sidemann, head of the Exeter Benedictine reformers, arrived there from Glastonbury in 968: although Conner suggests that the Exeter Book and its palaeographic relations were actually written at Exeter, the palaeographic evidence would seem equally to suit books imported to Exeter along with Sidemann and his cohort of reforming Benedictines. Conner gives two counter-arguments to the possibility of a Glastonbury provenance, but the second must surely no longer apply: 'the manuscript evidence,' Conner writes, 'indicates no tradition of copying vernacular texts there, not even of adding glosses in Old English' (*Anglo-Saxon Exeter* 86); Gretsich's discussion of Aldhelm glossing that apparently took place at Glastonbury must supersede the lack of manuscript evidence to provide support for both glossing activity and an apparent interest in vernacular verse.¹²

Of course, other locations for the copying of the Exeter Book

have been proposed. Richard Gameson's cautious conclusion is that 'the origin of the Exeter Book is best considered unknown' (179), and he notes that 'Christ Church [Canterbury] is certainly a possibility' although 'not the only one' (ibid.). If we replace Glastonbury with Canterbury in my argument, the linkage with Dunstan is still very much a possibility, although the mechanism by which the Exeter Book reached Exeter would be less clear. The evidence of verbal parallels (primarily unique parallels) between *Riddle 40* and other Exeter poems powerfully associates the translation with the Exeter collection; the very fact that it is an Aldhelmian translation at least tentatively associates the poem with mid-tenth-century students of Aldhelm. Even if the Exeter book was copied at Christ Church, the Glastonbury Aldhelm seminar described by Gretsche (*Intellectual Foundations* 381) would still provide a very likely place of composition, with the Exeter exemplar (now including *Riddle 40*) presumably travelling with Dunstan to Canterbury. Recalling Donald Scragg's arguments for localizing the Vercelli collection in Canterbury (*Vercelli Homilies* lxxix prefers St Augustine's in particular), however, we must note that there is no clear trace of knowledge of *Andreas* and *Elene* in the *Riddle 40* translation: *Riddle 40* is unlikely to have been translated in Canterbury itself, it seems, making the Glastonbury possibility that much stronger, even if we conclude that the Exeter Book itself was copied in Canterbury.

What is most important about this discussion is the way in which *Riddle 40* stands in a medial position between Rawlinson C. 697, on the one hand, and the Exeter Book on the other. Dunstan's hand in Rawlinson C. 697, the Aldhelmian content of *Riddle 40*, and the mid-century date of composition make Dunstan's Glastonbury an intriguing possibility for a place of composition; because of the Exeter verbal parallels, the inclusion of *Riddle 40* within the Exeter collection, and that collection's ultimate location in Exeter, Butler's recent argument for a Glastonbury origin for the Exeter Book is especially appealing, as it would account precisely for the mechanisms through which *Riddle 40* stands between Rawlinson C. 697 and the Exeter Book.

Gretsche's felicitous phrase, 'Aldhelm seminar' (*Intellectual Foundations* 381), reminds us, of course, of the difficulty of pinning down the authorship of *Riddle 40* to Dunstan himself; the translation might have been undertaken by any member of the

seminar, and even Æthelwold himself must remain a candidate. But, if one might borrow a bit of terminology from the art world, it seems to me that the case for attributing *Riddle 40* to ‘the school of Dunstan’ is a strong one. In the following section, I suggest that Æthelwold also must have stood at the head of another ‘school’ of Old English verse, perhaps as its primary author.

The Authorship of *The Menologium*

Perhaps the most widely recognized and undisputed example of direct poetic quotation in Old English is the quoting of the metrical version of Psalm 117, verse 22 in *The Menologium*:

þis is se dæg þæne drihten us
wisfæst worhte, werā cneorissum
eallum eorðwarum eadigum to blisse (Men 60-2)

(This is the day that the wise Lord made for us, a cause of joy for the generations of men, for all the blessed inhabitants of the earth.)

In apparently replacing *The Metrical Psalms* “eallum eorðtudrum” (PPs 117.22 3a) with ‘eallum eorðwarum,’ the poet of *The Menologium* seems to provide a textbook example of ‘formulaic reading,’ replacing a rare expression (‘eorðtudrum’ is a *hapax legomenon*, appearing only here in Old English) with a more familiar formula (‘eallum eorðwarum’ also appears in *And* 568a and *ChristB* 723a). In making this substitution (if, indeed, it can be ascribed to the *Menologium* poet, and not to a scribe), we see already how fully steeped the poet seems to be in the classical Old English tradition.

The relationship between *The Metrical Psalms* and *The Menologium* is complicated, however, by the fact that, while *The Metrical Psalms* regularly uses metrical patterns characteristic of late Old English verse, *The Menologium* is a classical composition, although (as the borrowing indicates) plainly later than *The Psalms*. Scholarly consensus agrees that *The Menologium* takes these lines from *The Psalms*, rather than the other way around, even though *The Menologium* is much more metrically

conservative.¹³ The general conservatism of *The Menologium*, indeed, confirms the direction of the quotation, as the placement of ‘dæg’ (since it locates the alliteration on the final syllable of *Men* 60a) is otherwise unparalleled in *The Menologium*, while such an alliterative placement is commonplace in *The Metrical Psalms*. And while *The Menologium* appears to be notably conservative in relation to *The Metrical Psalms* in terms of its metrical forms, the situation is reversed in other aspects of its alliterative practice, as *The Psalms* allows palatal and velar ‘g’ to co-alliterate, while they count as separate alliterators in *The Menologium*.¹⁴ In short, each work is conservative in relation to the other, depending upon what criteria we consider. Such a situation is clearly troublesome and deserving of some explanation.

Interestingly, the two-line poetic scholion that appears in the Royal Psalter and that is attributed by Gretsche to Æthelwold may be relevant for assessing the relation between *The Menologium* and *The Metrical Psalms*. The verse passage in question reads:

Wæs mid Iudeum on geardagum
ealra cyninga gehwelc Cristus nemned.

(from Gretsche, *Intellectual Foundations* 78)

(Amongst the Jews in ancient days, every king was named Christu.)¹⁵

Gretsche notes that in one instance, the Royal Psalter gloss may have influenced *The Metrical Psalms* (in relation to the word ‘cocerpannan,’ *PPs* 101.3 4a),¹⁶ although (brief as it is) the metrical forms of the Royal scholion seem to be characteristic of classical Old English verse, rather than the late Old English verse of *The Metrical Psalms*.¹⁷

Further, while one might hesitate to draw any conclusion based upon the lexical and phrasal associations involved in only two lines of verse, such a tracing does turn up some remarkable resonances. Notably, the first line of the Royal scholion echoes the familiar opening of *Beowulf*, ‘Hwæt, we Gar-Dena in geardagum,’ perhaps even including its use of cross alliteration, given that ‘Iudeas’ and ‘Iudeum’ usually occupy (as here) the Ssx foot of a Type C verse in Old English poetry. Further, the close occurrence of ‘geardagum’ and ‘nemned’ is paralleled in Old

English only in *Beowulf* 1354, ‘pone on geardagum Grendel nemdon.’¹⁸ Such parallels clearly seem to open the door for the possibility that the Royal scholion has a different source from the translation of *Riddle 40*, and we might note in addition that among the ‘poetic’ words identified by Gretsches elsewhere in the Royal Psalter glosses is ‘breostwylm,’ a word attested in verse only in *Beowulf* (*Intellectual Foundations* 64).

If the Royal Glossator and author of the Royal scholion, however, had access to *Beowulf*, then that would implicitly place the Royal Glossator (identified by Gretsches as probably Æthelwold) at some location separate from the translator of *Riddle 40*, which is perfectly possible if the Royal Psalter derives from Winchester or Abingdon (though Gretsches also admits Glastonbury as a possibility: *Intellectual Foundations* 267).¹⁹ In any case, the powerful association between the Royal Psalter, its poetic scholion, and Æthelwold described by Gretsches seems significant, and the potential access to *Beowulf* would seem to suggest the Royal Psalter was produced at a different centre than the *Riddle 40* translation. That the two poems were not produced by the same poet is potentially supported by the fact that *Riddle 40* allows palatal and velar ‘g’ to co-alliterate (see lines 17 and 58), while the Royal scholion may not do so (though its single relevant line is too little to stand on its own as confirmatory). But the fact, as noted above, that *The Menologium* also fails to allow the two forms of ‘g’ to co-alliterate at least might encourage us to ask if there might be an Æthelwoldian connection to *The Menologium* as well.

Table 3.2 Unique Parallels: *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle*

<i>Medg 92a</i>	<i>in as ðe m leoht</i>
<i>Medg 132a</i>	<i>at ulius monað</i>
<i>Num 175b</i>	<i>Engle and Seaxe</i>

a. Note the later use of this formula in *DEdw* 11a, ‘Englum and Sexum.’

The following discussion will support that likelihood, as well as the remarkable possibility that four other tenth-century poems belong to the same context, namely the four tenth-century *Chronicle* poems in the classical metre: *The Battle of Brunanburh*,

The Capture of the Five Boroughs, *The Coronation of Edgar*, and *The Death of Edgar*. At the least, the authorship of all six poems can be distinguished from that of *Riddle 40*, and if contextual evidence associates *Riddle 40* with the Exeter collection and Glastonbury, equally powerful contextual evidence associates these other poems with Winchester and Æthelwold.

In order to make the case for common authorship or a common authorial context for these poems, it is useful to begin by noting unique usages that are shared only between *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems, as listed in [Table 3.2](#).

The three unique parallels in [Table 3.2](#) alone are probably insufficient to indicate a certain relationship (either of common authorship or direct borrowing), but they are suggestive, especially when considered alongside some of the other rare verses and words used in *The Menologium*, as presented in [Table 3.3](#).

In each entry in [Table 3.3](#), all examples of these specific verses and words in the ASPR are listed, with the only exceptions as listed in the notes; such examples clearly suggest a high degree of shared vocabulary and expression between *The Menologium* and three of the four *Chronicle* poems, involving words and verses otherwise quite unusual in the corpus of Old English poetry. We should probably note the especially close parallels seen between *The Menologium* and *The Death of Edgar*, similarities of expression between these two works appear in seven of the nine parallels identified in [Tables 3.2](#) and [3.3](#). Three possible ways of accounting for similarities between *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems offer themselves: first, all of the tenth-century verses in question could derive separately from a shared oral-formulaic heritage; second, we might have evidence of direct borrowing between *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems (like that between *The Menologium* and *The Psalms*); or third, we might have evidence of common authorship. I leave out of consideration the remote possibility that the parallels seen here are merely random and accidental.

Table 3.3 Rare Expressions: *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* Poems

<i>Menl</i> 204b: <i>wealhwaer</i>	<i>Chron</i> 204b: <i>wealhwaer</i>
<i>Menl</i> 283b: <i>wealhwaer</i>	<i>Chron</i> 283b: <i>wealhwaer</i>
<i>DEdg</i> 17a: <i>wide and wealhwaer</i>	

~~Met 134b~~ Sordorencimraeftige

DEdg 7a: on rimcraefte

~~Met 66a~~ ealde uðwitan

Met22 54a: ald uðwita

Brun 69a: ealde uðwitan

~~Met 145a~~ iegbuend

DEdg 37a: egbuendra

CPPref 3a: iegbuendum

~~Met 624b~~ uppon roderum

Met20 124b: uppe ofer rodore

DEdg 29b: uppe on roderum^a

- a. The formula here is ‘up + rodor’ in Type A; it is also used (presumably later) in *Pr*50b, ‘uppe on roderum,’ which is orthographically identical with the *Death of Edgar* example.

As in the Alfredian examples from the last chapter, the oral-formulaic possibility is clearly the least likely of the three, not only because there are such clear parallels linking *The Menologium* to the *Chronicle* poems, but also because both are also linked to the Alfredian *Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* and *The Meters of Boethius*. Parallels to these particular Alfredian-era poems are unlikely to derive from later access to an oral tradition that has incorporated innovative verses written during Alfred’s reign, and *The Menologium* in particular seems to use verses likely to derive from Alfredian poems, as [Table 3.4](#) suggests.

Table 3.4 Unique Parallels: *The Menologium* and Alfredian-Era Poems

~~Met 396a~~ Gregorius

~~Met 872a~~ wuda and wyrtum

Met20 251a: wuda and wyrta

~~Met 190a~~ wecarenggyderum

~~Met 971b~~ Agustinus

In each case, the half-lines in question are found nowhere else in ASPR poems that are likely to pre-date the eleventh century. Not only were *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* and *The Meters of Boethius* composed in a literate mode (as discussed above), but their close association with long prose texts makes them unlikely to have been read very often in circumstances that would have influenced practising oral singers. While one can at

least image a performance setting in which *Genesis B* might influence later generations of oral singers, it is much harder to imagine that *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* would have a similar influence. We can conclude that the tenth-century poems in question were likely also produced in a literate mode.

Deciding whether the evidence supports direct borrowing between *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems or their common authorship, however, is somewhat more difficult. But the likelihood that these poems are all written compositions, rather than oral, paves the way for an attempt to distinguish between the two remaining possibilities. On the one hand, if *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems seem to borrow their otherwise unique expressions from the same range of poems, that would argue in favour of closeness of authorship. Given the sweeping metrical changes in process in the tenth century (seen not only in *The Metrical Psalms*, which pre-date at least *The Menologium*, but also in *The Death of Edgar II* and *An Exhortation to Christian Living*), if we find that *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems share a metrical system, that would also suggest closeness of authorship.²⁰ In short, if we have poems with a common set of rare expressions, a common set of probable source poems, and a common metrical system, it would seem appropriate to conclude that the poems in question are all by the same author. Since rare expressions have been addressed above, it is useful next to attempt to address these poems' apparent sources.

Table 3.5 Possible Sources: Additional Unique Parallels between *The Menologium* and Other ASPR Poems

<i>Men</i> 4285a	<i>Met</i> 1461a	infennidintæg
		mære peoden ^a
<i>Men</i> 653a	<i>Met</i> 636a	folcmonnate ^b
<i>Men</i> 178b	<i>Met</i> 178b	butatavþrimniltum
<i>Met</i> 446b		worhte æt frymðe
<i>Men</i> 614a	<i>Met</i> 614a	gedageimes
<i>Men</i> 168a	<i>Met</i> 168a	Gíðichonfæfens up
<i>Men</i> 802a	<i>Met</i> 802a	þe þe gefe gefe ^c
<i>Men</i> 921a	<i>Met</i> 921a	þe þe gefe gefe ^c
<i>Men</i> 965a	<i>Met</i> 965a	þe þe gefe gefe ^c
<i>Met</i> 93b		grund þa healden

Mald 295a: þær he wentigum d
Men 195a: wýscl weþþungen
Men 429a: and fræth, 285d b, 2737b:
 be frean hæse
Phoe 225a: a folda frætwe
Men 282a: wer womma leas
Mald 226a: upengla fweal

- a. Compare *PPs* 90.6 3, ‘oððe on midne dæg mære deoful.’
- b. Compare *GenA* 2294a, ‘þeod unmæte,’ and *And* 1219b, 1682b, ‘we(o) rod unmæte.’
- c. This formula also appears later in *Mald* 280b, ‘æwele gefera.’
- d. Compare *Beo* 379b, ‘þæi he þritiges’ and *MCharm* 2 4b, 42b, ‘and wið þritigum.’
- e. Compare *GenA* 965b, ‘be godes hæse’ and *Az* 92a, ‘burh frean hæse.’

In the case of *The Menologium*, a number of unique parallel words and phrases (besides those already noted) can be identified as occurring in only one other ASPR poem, as shown in the [Table 3.5](#).

The evidence presented in [Table 3.4](#) above suggests that *The Menologium* poet was familiar with *The Meters of Boethius* and Alfred’s *Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care*. [Table 3.5](#) offers additional insight, confirming the relationship to *The Metrical Psalms*, by identifying an additional unique parallel, also likely to be a quotation or borrowing. Further, however, multiple items on the list attest to probable knowledge of *Genesis A* (alongside a single parallel with *Genesis B*, which can be assumed to travel with *Genesis A* in the tenth century) and *Andreas*. Since ‘welpungen’ occurs nowhere else in Old English verse or prose, knowledge of *Beowulf* seems at least possible.²¹ The sequence ‘dagera rimes’ may clearly indicate familiarity with *Christ II*, especially as *The Menologium* also includes ‘dogora rimes’ as a verse (96a). The full-verse expression ‘wer womma leas’ may indicate knowledge of *Daniel*, although ‘womma leas’ as an Sxs foot also appears in *Christ III* (1451a, 1464a). The parallels with *The Phoenix* are also potentially significant, although ‘foldan’ and ‘frætwe’ are both common enough terms to suggest possible independent composition, and the alliterative linkage between

‘blostmum’ and ‘blowan’ is obviously a natural one. The parallels with *The Phoenix*, however, might be put into context by the parallels with *Riddle 40*: if, as I suggested above, *Riddle 40* can be ascribed to Dunstan or his school, then the author of *The Menologium* probably borrowed these verses directly from *Riddle 40*, which is certainly possible if the poet is indeed Æthelwold, since Æthelwold’s presence at Dunstan’s Glastonbury means he would probably have known *Riddle 40*, if it had indeed been translated there. To be precise, Æthelwold would presumably have studied the Old English verse available at Glastonbury (which I have hypothesized was roughly congruent with the contents of the Exeter Book), and some influence from Exeter poems such as *The Phoenix* might thus seep into later Æthelwoldian compositions. It is nevertheless important, however, to note that the *Menologium* poet’s knowledge of *Andreas*, *Beowulf*, the *Genesis* poems, and the Cynewulfian *Christ II* and *Elene* would correspond very closely indeed to the conclusions drawn above about what poems were probably known in Alfred’s circle, while the poet also appears to have known *The Meters of Boethius* and *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* as well. Given the range of borrowing sources, the *Menologium* poet, like the author of the Royal scholion, is unlikely to have been active at the same place as the *Riddle 40* translator.

When we turn to a unique-parallel analysis of the *Chronicle* poems in question, we find the data summarized in [Table 3.6](#).

Interestingly, unique parallels with all four *Chronicle* poems suggest a knowledge of both *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*. *Andreas*, *Elene*, *The Metrical Psalms*, and *The Meters of Boethius* show up here as well. As with the discussion of *The Menologium*, a single verse seems to be paralleled only in *Daniel* (although ‘eorðan dreamas’ may not seem to be such an unusual expression, and in fact it is used at least three times in prose). There are again possible (though notably infrequent) unique parallels with poems found only in the Exeter book (here, *Vainglory* and *The Order of the World*). Close unique verbal parallels indicate that *Judith* was probably used as a source for *Brunanburh*’s ‘beasts of battle’ passage, unless we hypothesize that both make use of a lost source.²² Nevertheless, the prominence of *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, *Andreas*, *Elene*, *The Meters of Boethius* and *The Metrical Psalms* on this list (and the lack of any clearly extensive reliance on other

works, despite occasional parallels) does not seem to give us any reason to suppose different authors for the *Chronicle* poems and *The Menologium*. Indeed, the lists of probable sources indicated by unique parallels for the poems in question are remarkably similar.

Table 3.6 Possible Sources: Unique Parallels between The *Chronicle* Poems and Other ASPR Poems

<i>Brul</i> 102a	<i>DEd</i> 3a	Deoborn beahgefaifa
<i>Brul</i> 46:5c	<i>Of</i> 10h	þa sæcþære sæcce
<i>Brun</i> 42a		beslagen æt sæcce
<i>Brul</i> 1735a	<i>f</i> 6g	fegefealleð
<i>Brul</i> 2073a	<i>g</i> 1d	ofeggrundas
<i>Brul</i> 11183a	<i>g</i> 1m	getetan ^a
<i>Bum</i> A 27332a	<i>l</i> 1d	bosme
<i>Brut</i> 2294b	<i>l</i> 4c	ampstede
<i>Brul</i> 13707b	<i>l</i> 1d	lides stefnan ^b
<i>Brul</i> 1490g	<i>l</i> 1d	æt gūðe
<i>Bum</i> A 45343a	<i>l</i> 1d	blædfeax
<i>Brul</i> 261a		salowigpadan
<i>Brul</i> 262a		hymnednebban
<i>Brul</i> 265a		wulf in wæde
<i>Bum</i> A 6817b	<i>l</i> 1d	þæs þæs secgað bec ^c
<i>Bum</i> A 72194c	<i>l</i> 1d	feradradimud ^d
<i>Brul</i> 172a		wlance wigsmipas ^e
<i>Bap</i> 12300a	<i>l</i> 1d	fealdummar ^f
<i>Gap</i> A 32101a	<i>l</i> 1d	Don Nildesceadeþ
<i>Brp</i> 570a	<i>l</i> 1d	þa þa þa
<i>Brul</i> 1294b	<i>l</i> 1d	Angangen wasarð
<i>GE</i> 11626a		semdaunnen
<i>DEd</i> 30h	<i>l</i> 1d	ðe dreamas
<i>DE</i> 18121a	<i>l</i> 1d	þa fudassend ^g
<i>GE</i> 1201b	<i>l</i> 1d	byrmedeulfu
<i>Brul</i> 608a		gamolfeax
<i>DE</i> 1729b	<i>l</i> 1d	wætra geþring ^h

- a. See also the hypermetric verse *Fort* 16a, ‘sumne sceal gar agetan.’
- b. See also *And* 403b, ‘æt lides stefnan.’
- c. Compare *ChristB* 785b and *GuthB* 878b, ‘Us secgað bee,’ as well as the probably later *LPr II* 20b, ‘bæs þe secgað bee.’

- d. Compare Az 142a, ‘on bam bradan brime.’
- e. The ‘wigsmið’ compound is used otherwise in Old English only in *GenA* 2704a and *PPs* 113.12 3a.
- f. Compare the probably later *Seasons* 40a, ‘deorne dæadfruman.’
- g. See also *El* 437b, 530b, 749b. The formula in question is a Type B verse; ‘nama’ when following a one-syllable name gives Type C, as in *And* 1322b, ‘þam wæs Crist nama.’ Given the working definition of formula that I used in the preceding chapter, the *Elene* verses are the only formulaic parallels, but it is worth noting the similarity of the C verses.
- h. Compare, however, *And* 369b, ‘ofer yða gebring,’ and *Beo* 2132b, ‘þæt ic on holma gebring.’

We should probably note as well how this evidence for direct reliance on prior poems as sources of diction and even full verses supplements recent work that sees these *Chronicle* poems as echoing Scandinavian skaldic praise poems. Matthew Townend’s important article, for example, intriguingly suggests that the tenth-century activities of the ‘Viking Age’ make for a cultural context in which even the West Saxon kings would have appreciated (and perhaps even promoted) their representation as leaders of Germanic war-bands, even if Townend’s claim that these poems must have circulated orally seems unnecessary to that larger point.²³ And while other recent work has stressed the multilingualism of the middle tenth century, it is nevertheless striking to see that the unique parallels in these *Chronicle* poems appear to show at least some of the language of the *comitatus*-ethos (especially in *Brunanburh*) as being pulled more or less directly from *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, and *Andreas*, while the beasts of battle scene appears to have an especially close relationship with *Judith*.²⁴ These Old English poetic parallels, it is important to point out, seem at least as precise and telling as most of the verbal parallels adduced as possible evidence of Norse influence.

Although no clear set of metrical criteria has even been successfully proposed for demonstrating shared authorship of two Old English poems, there are criteria that might be brought to bear in this particular case, especially (as noted above) once we recall that *The Menologium* distinguishes between palatal and velar ‘g’ as separate alliterators, as this practice is unusual within Old English poetry.²⁵ The general (but not exclusive) use of

classical verse forms and the complete absence of hypermetric forms may also be significant. But the following practices can also be identified as typical of *The Menologium*: occasional tolerance of stressed elements in the ‘dip’ of type B (e.g., *Men* 6b, ‘habbað foreweard gear’; probably also 41a, 76a, 137a, 144a, 154a, 174a); tolerance for the specific type Sxx/S (e.g., *Men* 68a, ‘halige dagas’); a requirement for double alliteration in the specific type Sx/(x)Sx;²⁶ no requirement for double alliteration in type Ssx/S.²⁷ These metrical criteria thus allow comparison to the *Chronicle* poems on a variety of independent points, as summarized in Table 3.7, where *Riddle 40* is also considered as a point of comparison.

The items marked by asterisks in *Brunanburh*’s column of Table 3.7 involve the following two verses:

Brun 18a: garum ageted

Brun 44a: giungne æt guðe.

These verses have double alliteration if palatal and velar ‘g’ alliterate, but they have single alliteration if they do not. Because both verses (as noted in Table 3.6) appear to be direct borrowings from *Andreas*, I treat them on the table as not necessarily reflective of the *Brunanburh* poet’s own compositional habits, which otherwise show regular double alliteration in Sx/(x)Sx and non-alliteration of the two ‘g’s’.²⁸

Table 3.7 Metrical Comparison: *The Menologium*, the *Chronicle* Poems, and *Riddle 40*

Metrical criterion	
classical verse forms	yes
hypermetric verse	yes
palatal and velar ‘g’ alliterate	not
stressed elements in dip of Type B	yes
allows Type Sxx/S	only
double alliteration in Type Sx/(x)Sx	yes
double alliteration in Type Ssx/S	no

- Note, however, that *Rid*40 5b, ‘swa he ymb pas utan hweorfeð,’ must either be scanned as a lone hypermetric b-line or as an intrusive late Old English verse type (see below).
- Note that in at least five comparison verses like *Rid*40 76a,

‘leohtre ic eom micle’ (see also 74a, 78a, 80a, and 92a) single alliteration is allowed in Sx/(xx)Sx, although this practice is presumably caused by the poet sacrificing metrical consistency for closeness of translation.

Further, all of the poems under discussion are generally written in the classical metre, although most include a small number of verses that are either unmetrical or that should be analysed as late Old English verse, often involving proper names (e.g., *Men* 72a, ‘þæs pe Eastermonað’; 139a, ‘Agustus’; 196a, ‘Nouembris’; 220a, ‘Decembris’; *Brun* 3b, ‘ealdorlangne tir’; 59a, ‘Westseaxena land’; 62b, ‘and þane hasewanpadan’; *Capt* 4a, ‘Hwitanwyllesgeat’; *CEdg* 8a, ‘Pentecostenes dæg’; 19b, ‘ðā þis geworden wæs’).²⁹ Metricists, of course, might defend some of these verses by ‘under-dotting’ vowels or using other regularizing tactics, but it seems more effective to simply suggest that these poems, while generally classical, occasionally allow late Old English types (which must have been contemporary), a practice we will also see employed in *Maldon*, below. This tolerance for occasional late Old English forms is a further metrical feature shared by the poems in question.

The metrical similarities seen between *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* verse, as [Table 3.7](#) suggests, are great enough to support the possibility of common authorship; certainly nothing on the table rules out the possibility, and the large number of similarities in independent categories would seem to minimize the possibility of separate authorship. Notably, these five poems differ in at least one important respect from *Riddle 40*: the alliteration of ‘g.’ When we add in the common vocabulary seen especially between *The Menologium* and *The Death of Edgar*, as well as the evidence of unique parallels, suggesting that *Genesis A* and *Beowulf* were probably known to the authors of all five relevant poems, and that *Andreas*, *The Meters of Boethius*, *The Metrical Psalms*, and *Elene* also appear among the likely sources for both *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems, it begins to seem very unlikely that these works could have been composed by different authors.

I should note also that I have probably treated the question of common authorship of at least some of these poems with undue caution. Almost certainly, *The Battle of Brunanburh* and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* were by a single author (see the

independent demonstration of this likelihood by Scragg, ‘A Reading of *Brunanburh*’), and the two Edgar poems were also very likely written by a single figure (on the basis of timing, subject matter, and shared textual history, if nothing else). Collapsing the columns of Table 3.7 on such a basis would only strengthen the argument that the *Menologium* poet, the poet of annals 937 and 942, and the poet of annals 973 and 975 were all the same figure. It is probably worth noting also that the metrical criteria employed here would easily distinguish all of these poems from *Maxims II*, the other poem to be found in the C manuscript of the *Chronicle*. *Maxims II* does use hypermetric verses, it allows palatal and velar ‘g’ to alliterate, it allows single alliteration in Sx/(x)Sx (three out of seven examples have single alliteration), and prefers double alliteration in type E (three out of four Ssx/S verses have double alliteration). That *Maxims II* is by a different author seems metrically certain, and this example thus confirms how significant the relative uniformity of the *Chronicle* poems and *The Menologium* really is.

Of course, there is no real chronological or text-historical difficulty with identifying all five poems as being by a single author. *Brunanburh* and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* were likely to have been written (as Scragg, ‘A Reading of *Brunanburh*,’ has recently argued) no earlier than the middle 950s, and the Edgar poems must date to the middle 970s. The especially close lexical links between *The Menologium* and *The Death of Edgar* would seem to indicate a date for *The Menologium* in the 970s as well.³⁰ Dating *The Metrical Psalms* to the period of the Benedictine Reform during Edgar’s reign would, it seems, make *The Psalms* available in time for their quotation in *The Menologium*, explaining how the ‘late Old English verse’ *Psalms* could pre-date the comparatively classical *Menologium*. Finally, the preservation of *The Menologium* (which takes the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical year as its subject matter) only in the C manuscript of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* suggests that *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems may have had a long history of association.³¹

This last point, I think, helps point the way toward at least the tentative identification of this poet as Æthelwold of Winchester, since Æthelwold’s interest in the ecclesiastical year is manifestly demonstrated in his *Regularis Concordia*. Likewise, the textual history of the *Chronicle* for the years in question may exhibit

Æthelwoldian resonances, especially since the Parker Chronicle is often described as having a Winchester provenance for the middle to late tenth century, and it is worthwhile to summarize the evidence here. Ker indicates that ‘the earliest parts’ of the Parker Chronicle (through annal 924) ‘may not have been written at Winchester, but the rest [was] no doubt added there at intervals during the tenth century and shortly after 1000’ (*Catalogue* 59). Malcolm Parkes argues mostly for a Winchester origin in relation to the earlier scribes (chiefly Scribes 1 and 2; ‘Palaeography’); his ‘Fragment’ essay argues more specifically for a Nunnaminster origin. In her edition, Janet Bately suggests a Winchester location, perhaps especially around 963 (*MS A* xiii-xiv). David Dumville expresses scepticism about much of the association of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173 (and the *Chronicle* in general) with Winchester (*Wessex and England* 55-98), but he does note of the Parker manuscript that ‘a new quire of annals was begun, therefore, ca 950, perhaps but by no means certainly at Winchester. It was probably being continued for a brief spell at Winchester in the early 960s’ (66). Notably, fol. 27v of the Parker Chronicle (in the hand of Scribe 3) seems to have originally ended with (empty) annal number 956; fol. 28r (in the hand of Scribe 4) has further annals filling the page to 964 (but with annal numbers to 967; these details can easily be seen in the Parker Chronicle facsimile, edited by Flower and Smith). The material on fol. 28r includes a description of Æthelwold’s elevation to Winchester and his reformation of the Old and New Minsters at Winchester and other houses. It seems striking in the current context that the ends of these two scribal stints in the Parker manuscript coincide so closely with Æthelwold’s appointment to the abbacy of Abingdon (before 23 November 955; see Gretsch’s convenient biographical summary, *Intellectual Foundations* 428-9) and his appointment as bishop of Winchester in 963.

Of course, Æthelwold is well known to have been deeply associated with the courts of Æthelstan and Edgar, and his involvement with Edgar’s coronation in 973 was especially close. In short, the content of *Brunanburh* and the two Edgar poems (one of which specifically addressed the coronation) interlocks closely with Æthelwoldian concerns, as does *The Menologium*’s account of the ecclesiastical year. Further, one of the rare lexical items noted

by Gretsche among the Aldhelm glosses may clinch the Æthelwoldian connection: ‘wordsnotor’ (discussed in Gretsche, *Intellectual Foundations* 177-9), appears outside of the Aldhelmian *De uirginitate* glosses in a tenth-century context only in *The Death of Edgar* 27a, ‘wis and wordsnotor.’³² We might note also that among the ‘poetic’ words identified by Gretsche in the Aldhelm glosses (*Intellectual Foundations* 179-82), we find ‘sædraca,’ which appears only in *Beowulf*, and ‘hilting,’ for which Gretsche adduces as parallels the Beowulfian sword-names Hrunting and Nægling. That is, the Aldhelm glosses may also show unique parallels to *Beowulf*, in much the same way that the *Chronicle* poems (and possibly the Royal Psalter scholion as well) appear to use *Beowulf* as a source of verses and diction.³³

Once again, however, the attribution to Æthelwold himself is impossible to make with any degree of certainty, although the contexts and parallels noted above make it likely that we can attribute *The Menologium* and these tenth-century *Chronicle* poems to ‘the school of Æthelwold.’ In the poet’s apparent access to so similar a selection of Old English poetry as was available in Alfred’s court, and in his probable access to *The Pastoral Care* and *The Meters of Boethius*, it seems we might go even further to suggest that Alfred’s library might have remained largely intact after his death. If so, a great library of Old English verse may well have lain at Winchester; the *Menologium* poet’s apparent access to the Alfredian collection (alongside the comparatively slight evidence of access to poems now preserved only in the Exeter book) suggests quite powerfully that these poems were not composed at the same place as *Riddle 40*, though the *Menologium* poet may have read those poems at some point and seems to have been especially familiar with *Riddle 40* itself, just as we might expect if Dunstan (or a member of his school) had composed it while Æthelwold himself had been at Glastonbury. Such a history, of course, would account very precisely for the very occasional unique parallels between *The Menologium* or the *Chronicle* poems and the Exeter collection, in the sense of accounting for both their existence and their relative infrequency.

Although his essay is focused on a slightly later period, one might recall Simon Keynes’s comments about the apparent existence of a royal West Saxon writing office in the middle tenth century, also presumably based at Winchester (‘Royal

Government'). Whether Alfred's library might have been held in ecclesiastical or secular hands is unlikely to be determined, but the possibility that Alfred's library might have remained at Winchester receives support from a quite different source, *Bald's Leechbook*, which makes up the first two sections of London, British Library, Royal 12 D. xvii. This manuscript was copied by Scribe 3 of the Parker Chronicle, and *Bald's Leechbook* famously 'claims to record advice sent to King Alfred by the Patriarch of Jerusalem' (Hollis 198), leading to the consensus that it 'appears to have taken the form in which we have it either shortly before or after the death of King Alfred' (ibid.). In short, one book apparently deriving at least in part from writings available to Alfred was indeed kept at Winchester and available to the very scribe who copied *Brunanburh* into the Parker Chronicle in the middle tenth century.

Finally, it is important to emphasize clearly that the method of poetic composition that I have described for these poems (as for the Alfredian poems addressed in the last chapter) must have involved careful study of Old English poetic manuscripts, and possibly even a process of searching through them for relevant verses or rare words to borrow. My own method, after all, has focused closely on conspicuously rare verses and rare poetic words. As such, this compositional method would appear to have clear affinities with the hermeneutic style in Latin, of which 'Æthelwold was one of the most ardent practitioners' (Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations* 125). The Latin hermeneutic style is briefly described in Lapidge's foundational essay as 'a style whose most striking feature is the ostentatious parade of unusual, often very arcane and apparently learned vocabulary' including 'archaisms,' 'neologisms,' and 'loan-words' ('Hermeneutic Style' 67). Gretsch has suggested that the 'flamboyant' and 'recherche' vocabulary of the Aldhelm glosses tends toward the adoption or transmission of hermeneutic style into Old English, apparently in an effort to recapture the characteristic register of Aldhelm's work.³⁴ Modern readers of Old English, trained from an early stage on the diction of *Beowulf* and other classical Old English poems, may not fully appreciate the degree to which the language of *Brunanburh* or *The Menologium* might have seemed arcane or archaic to a contemporary audience, although even a brief comparison with *The Metrical Psalms* clearly indicates these

poems' comparative conservativeness in terms of both diction and metre. Yet *The Metrical Psalms* (as noted in chapter 1) are likely to have been a culturally important production: the previous efforts of Alfred to translate the Psalms into prose would have marked an Old English version of the Psalms as an important text in the first place, and the Benedictine investment in the Latin Psalms makes the production of *The Metrical Psalms* in the middle tenth century likely to have been associated with the Benedictine Reform it-self.³⁵ The sheer magnitude of *The Metrical Psalms* (over 5000 surviving lines of verse) and their (partial) preservation in a variety of later contexts separately attest to the importance of their cultural presence. In the late tenth-century context provided by *The Metrical Psalms* and their apparent popularity, the poetic conservatism of the 'Æthelwoldian' poems can be even more clearly seen to have the character of the arcane and the archaic. Even compared to *Riddle 40*, the dense accumulations of both rare and common classical Old English verses and words in these Æthelwoldian poems stand out; the frequent claim that the classical Old English compositional style survived into the eleventh century, I think, mistakes these poems' investment in rare poetic vocabulary and expression for the common coin of poetic currency. Undoubtedly, the copying of the Nowell, Junius, Vercelli, and Exeter books in the late tenth or early eleventh century contributes to modern readers' perceptions that the classical style survived so late, but the logic behind these great poetic collections may well have been precisely the 'recherche' interest in classical Old English verse prompted by the Benedictine Reform, as described by Gretsche.³⁶ That arcane and archaizing performance is really at issue in late tenth-century classical compositions, however, is made almost certain by the remarkable nature of *The Battle of Maldon*, composed some years after Æthelwold's death.

Literate Poetic Composition and *The Battle of Maldon*

The Battle of Maldon is often praised (despite its metrical innovations) for its traditionality, but here, too, we find compelling evidence for the direct borrowing of classical formulas, rather than independent (oral or oral-derived)

composition. It is useful to begin with a look at some of *Maldon*'s methods of indicating speech, as given in [Table 3.8](#).

From a formulaic perspective, the selection of speech-indicators given in [Table 3.8](#) is remarkable. 'Wordum mælde,' for example, appears also in *Genesis A* (2193b); *Andreas* (300b); *Elene* (351b and 537b), and *Juliana* (351b, 455b, and 538b), while 'mapelode' appears elsewhere in *Genesis A* (4x), *Elene* (8x), *Riddle 38* (1x), *Beowulf* (24x), *Widsith* (1x), and *Waldere* (1x). Type B verses ending 'pæt word gecwæð' are also clearly formulaic, appearing in *Andreas* (4x), *Elene* (2x), and *The Phoenix* (2x). But 'gemælde' is used only one other time in the ASPR, in *Genesis B* (790a); indeed, 'gemælde' is used nowhere else in Old English at all.³⁷

Table 3.8 Some Speech-Formulas in *Maldon*

<i>Mald</i> 26b: wordum mælde
<i>Mald</i> 43b: wordum mælde
<i>Mald</i> 210b: wordum mælde
<i>Mald</i> 42a: Byrhtnoð mapelode
<i>Mald</i> 309a: Byrhtwold mapelode
<i>Mald</i> 168b: þa gyt pæt word gecwæð
<i>Mald</i> 230a: Offa gemælde
<i>Mald</i> 244a: Leofsunu gemælde

As suggested above in the context of other verses likely to be borrowed from Old Saxon, the '[proper name] + gemælde' formula, at least, has little claim to being a true Old English poetic formula, since outside of *Genesis B*, it appears only here in *Maldon*, a century later.³⁸ And while it is at least conceivable that '[proper name] + gemælde' might have passed from the text of *Genesis B* into a hypothetical oral tradition in the interim, it has certainly left no traces elsewhere: surely the simplest explanation for the appearance of this formula in *Maldon* is that it is borrowed directly from *Genesis B*.

Nevertheless, the possibility that an oral tradition might have incorporated Old Saxon verses in the tenth century is still worth considering, especially since the tenth-century metrical and poetic changes that marked the 'late Old English verse' tradition might conceivably be seen as a kind of metrical reanalysis prompted by the challenge of understanding Old Saxon-derived

verses as metrical in Old English.³⁹ That metrical changes certainly occurred can be seen even in a highly conservative poem like *Maldon*, where a number of verses or lines are classically unmetrical, usually due to problems of alliteration, as shown in Table 3.9.

Line 29b deserves special comment: Scragg (*Maldon* 69) claims that ‘sæmen’ and ‘snell’ do not alliterate here, and I am inclined to agree, although that leaves both 271 and 282 (the well-known rhyming lines) without any alliteration at all. As Scragg suggests, except for the rhyming lines, all other lines in *Maldon* (including 29b) support the conclusion that for the *Maldon* poet, all ‘s-’ clusters function as separate alliterators, so that ‘sn-’ does not alliterate with ‘s’ and neither alliterates with ‘sw-’ (*Maldon* 52, note 136). This innovation goes in the opposite direction from the late Old English verse of *The Metrical Psalms* (which allows ‘s-’ and ‘sc-’ to co-alliterate). Certainly, *Maldon*’s treatment of ‘s’ alliteration should be seen as non-traditional; it may derive from a mistaken, even hypercorrect interpretation based upon the poet’s reading of classical verse, or else it is an extension of the rules for ‘s-’ clusters. Either way, it would be difficult to see it as orally derived.

Table 3.9 Metrical Anomalies in *Maldon*

Metrical Difficulty
271 alliteration on finite hard only
282 metrical type Seax 600 Sx
29b alliteration in b-line (?)
45b alliteration on ‘s’
69a alliteration on ‘f’
75b alliteration on ‘w’
80a alliteration on ‘m’
183 alliteration on ‘g’
242a alliteration on ‘b’
266a alliteration on ‘h’
271a alliteration on ‘h’
288a alliteration on ‘h’
298a alliteration on ‘s’ ^a

a. I leave out of the account here verses to be scanned as Type B

with alliteration only on the second foot (in the formalism used in my *Early English Metre*, type xb [e.g., xx/sxS or x/sxxS]). Such verses, however, do appear with surprising frequency in *Maldon* (22a, 184a, and 263a), and they might also be seen as evidence of late Old English forms being used.

Beyond this unusual verse, however, given the anomalies listed in Table 3.9, one can hardly assent to Scragg’s larger comment, ‘The problem [with *Maldon*’s metrical forms] does not lie in alliteration’ (*Maldon* 29); at least ten lines have troublesome alliteration patterns. Three of these verses (9a, 28a, and 69a) involve metrical innovations in Old English that parallel the kinds of metrical Old Saxonisms that I have elsewhere described appearing in some Alfredian verse, but the other examples involve late Old English forms that cannot be derived directly from Old Saxon. Further, this list ignores the frequently observed anomalies associated with *Maldon*’s extensive use and variety of anacrusis (a ‘late Old English verse’ analysis of *Maldon* would identify such syllables as extrametrical, a phenomenon quite different from anacrusis in its origins and effects; see my *Early English Metre* 74). Two particular examples of such syllables from *Maldon* are especially worth considering, since they have unique parallels in other poems. These examples bring into focus the key difficulty that must concern us here: verses in *Maldon* frequently break the rules observed in classical verse, and (at least sometimes) they do so even in verses that appear to be extremely close analogues to classical verses attested in earlier poems. In order to understand *Maldon* and its place in Old English literature, we must understand how such a situation might have come about.

Table 3.10 Innovative ‘Anacrusis’ in *Maldon* and Poetic Parallels

<i>Mald</i> 35a:	Serflog utt gewat
<i>Mald</i> 146b:	þu mis gewas þes blōðra

- a. It is important to note that ‘ut’ and ‘gewat’ are collocated in verse only in the two cited examples. Likewise, *Mald* 146b and *El* 96b are the only poetic examples of the ‘[person] + wæs py/ þe blibra’ expression. Not only are these the only close parallels, but they are ‘formulas’ otherwise unrecorded in Old English verse.

Two possible explanations for *Maldon* 72a and 146b appear to offer themselves, analogous to the possibilities considered regarding the earlier tenth-century poems above. On the one hand, the *Maldon* poet might have composed such verses in an utterly traditional way, drawing upon a long oral heritage in which highly traditional formulas or systems (such as '[noun] + ut gewat' or '[person] + wæs py blipra') were not only handed down from generation to generation but also evolved metrically, allowing (by the time of *Maldon*'s composition) the initial unstressed syllables to be added where once they would have been disallowed. On the other hand, however, the *Maldon* poet might have simply borrowed these particular verses directly from *Brunanburh* and *Elene*, replacing the first noun in each, and at the same time adding in the articles to suit his own sense of metre and grammar, with never a suspicion that the resulting *Maldon* verses might have been unmetrical at an earlier time.⁴⁰ The fact that neither verse appears elsewhere in the ASPR would seem to weaken the case for viewing them as current formulas (and hence strengthen the case for direct borrowing), but critics and editors have not always seen things that way. Although considering different possible sources of influence, Gordon's 1937 assessment, even before the advent of oral-formulaic thinking, was that 'there is no reason to suppose that the *Maldon* poet imitated *Beowulf*, or even that he knew it; he knew poetry of that kind. His work has parallels also in the *Finnesburh* fragment, and in the martial passages of *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Judith*' (24). With an understanding of oral-formulaic processes, more modern readers have generally attributed such verbal parallels to a shared formulaic compositional system.⁴¹

It seems to me, however, that (as in the poems discussed earlier in this chapter) only direct poetic borrowing can explain some of the features of *Maldon*, although it remains clear that the *Maldon* poet was a clever and perhaps even inspired composer of compound words and verses in his own right.⁴² The evidence for borrowing, however, once again demands a fairly extensive analysis and presentation. We can begin by returning to a consideration of the fact that *Maldon* uses the '[proper name] + gemælde' formula twice: how are we to understand the *Maldon* poet's repeated use of a verse (and word) elsewhere so rare in Old English?

To answer such a question, I believe we must note the degree to which such a pattern is typical of *Maldon*. A surprising number of conspicuously rare words that appear only once elsewhere in the ASPR are used multiply in *Maldon*, as noted in [Table 3.11](#).

Except for ‘*franca*’ (which is itself still a rare word), my search of the Dictionary of Old English online corpus finds that the rest of these words are, in fact, recorded nowhere else in Old English.⁴³ As these examples show, *Maldon* repeatedly uses incredibly rare Old English words as if they were commonplace.⁴⁴ If *Maldon* had not survived, the very rarity of these words would certainly indicate how infrequently the oral-formulaic generative system would have produced them; their multiple use in *Maldon* suggests not the poet’s access to that system, but rather a much more limited access to poetic diction that forces him or her into repetition. Further, the *Maldon* poet’s repeated use of exceedingly rare words for the poem recalls the kind of ‘borrowing’ composition discussed above.⁴⁵ Ultimately, the density of repeated formulas and lexis in *Maldon* is not at all what we expect from an oral-formulaic poet, but it is perfectly consonant with a poet who is building up a heroic poem from a library of pre-existing written texts.⁴⁶

Table 3.11 Rare Words Used Repeatedly in *Maldon*

Maldon	Elsewhere
26b, 43b	gemælde
32b, 58b	hafenode
77a, 286a	sæliða
77b, 110b, 182b	franca (‘spear’)
90a, 162b	lidmen
268b, 316a	wigplegan

We can confirm this conclusion, I believe, by considering the evidence of ‘full-line formulas.’ Since the most basic formulaic unit in Old English is the half-line, full-line formulas (although they undoubtedly exist) are comparatively unusual, and the evidence of full-line analogues to lines from *Maldon* is therefore correspondingly significant. [Table 3.12](#) shows full-line parallels between *Maldon* and other ASPR poems.

Table 3.12 Full-line Analogues between *Maldon* and Other Poems

Mald 83: þa hwile þe hi wæpna wealdan moston
Mald 272: þa hwile ðe he wæpna wealdan moste
Beo 2038: þenden hie ðam wæpnum wealdan moston
Mald 95: hwa þære wælstowe wealdan mote
Beo 2984: þæt hie wælstowe wealdan moston
Mald 118: swiðe mid his swurde swenges ne wyrnde
MSol 121: swiðmode sweopan swenga ne wyrnað
Mald 194: flugon on þæt fæsten and hyra feore burgon
El 134: flugon on fæsten ond feore burgon
Mald 212: Gemunan þa mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon
Beo 2633: Ic ðæt mæl geman þær we medu þegun^a
Mald 232: þegenas to þearfe, nu ure þeoden lið
Beo 2709: þegn æt ðearfe! þæt ðam þeodne wæs
Mald 293: on wælstowe wundum sweltan
Brun 43: on wælstowe wundum forgrunden

a. Note also that both the *Maldon* and *Beowulf* lines are immediately followed by clauses beginning ‘bonne we.’

In each of the cases seen in Table 3.12, the parallels are close, and the individual half-lines involved are often strikingly infrequent in Old English. Although common enough in the prose of the *Chronicle*, ‘wælstowe,’ for example, appears only seven times in the ASPR; the four examples here are the only times it appears in Type C. We might imagine the Type A ‘wealdan + motan’ formula to be a common one in Old English verse since it appears five times on this list, but in fact there are only eight total examples, with the others in *Guthlac B* 1159b; *Metrical Psalm* 90.11 3b and *Beowulf* 2827b. No other verses link ‘sweng’ and ‘wiernan,’ ‘fleon’ and ‘fæsten,’ or ‘gemunan’ and ‘mæl.’⁴⁷ *Beowulf* 1797a., ‘þegnes bearfe’ is the only verse other than *Maldon* 232a and *Beowulf* 2709a to link ‘þegn’ and ‘þearf.’ In short, not only do the lines collected here show remarkable verbal overlaps with these other poems, but they do so with verses for which there is (again) surprisingly little evidence of their ever having been current or widespread formulas in Old English, since they generally appear only in *Maldon* and (in each case) in exactly one other poem. And the similarity seen between *Maldon* 83 and 272 is itself a fine example of the poet’s general habit of repetition.

Table 3.13

Bedworf

4575aryarandahada
2349bblddigergare
1636abbadandbhuuecg
2325afllomlfoesfoesntrem

Given that full-line formulas in the inherited poetic tradition must have been much rarer than half-line formulas, it strains credibilty to conclude that the *Maldon* poet had oral-formulaic access to so many full-line formulas otherwise surviving separately and uniquely in these various poems. Like the *Maldon* poet's apparent search for rare poetic words, his repetitions of full-line structures used in other poems are most easily understandable as indicating his participation in the literate mode of poetic composition. *Maldon*, too, was probably not only composed pen-in-hand, but with direct access to other poetic manuscripts that the poet could borrow from.

Indeed, it is crucial to take the analysis further to once again attempt to reconstruct the poet's probable source texts. The evidence presented so far regarding the rare words 'hafenode' and 'lidmen,' as well as the four full-lines from *Beowulf* echoed closely in *Maldon* indicates that *Beowulf* was almost certainly a direct source, despite Gordon's previously noted claim to the contrary. If additional confirmation is needed, a number of other rare compounds appear only in *Maldon* and *Beowulf*, 'brimliþendra' (*Mald* 27b, *Beo* 568b), 'æscholt' (*Mald* 230b, *Beo* 330a), 'gylpwordum' (*Mald* 274b, *Beo* 675b), and 'gryreleoða' (*Mald* 285a, *Beo* 768a). Several additional half-lines appearing only in the two poems (and nowhere else) are listed in [Table 3.13](#).

Taken together, the evidence of rare words and compounds, half-line formulas, and full-line formulas used nowhere else in Old English must make it certain that the *Maldon* poet knew *Beowulf* directly. Of course, to identify the *Maldon* poet as a reader or audience for *Beowulf* in or after the last decade of the tenth century offers no chronological difficulty: the date of the *Beowulf* manuscript itself announces the existence of a late tenth- or early eleventh-century audience for the poem.

In order to determine if we can discover other works accessed by the *Maldon* poet, words and formulas that occur only in

Maldon and in just one other work from the ASPR are listed in [Table 3.14](#).

For clarity's sake, I have once again ordered the entries in [Table 3.14](#) according to the locations of the probable sources, rather than their order in *Maldon*. Especially when considered alongside the data regarding parallels with *Beowulf* presented earlier, the parallels collected in this table are remarkable, but they must be interpreted with caution. For one thing, *Maldon* also has many unique compounds, such as 'garræs' (32a), 'brimmen'/'brimmanna' (295b, 49a), 'easteðe' (63a), 'wihagan' (102a), 'hringlocan' (145a), 'fealohilte' (166b), 'worulldgesælig' (219b), and 'feorhhus' (297a). Clearly, *Maldon* has a number of rare compounds, some unique, and others very restricted within the surviving poetic corpus. We might interpret this circumstance as simply indicating that the poetic tradition of compounding was alive and well in the late tenth century.⁴⁸ If, as seems likely, the *Maldon* poet was indeed capable of coining his own compounds, then no individual item on this list is necessarily diagnostic, especially if it is a lexical parallel, rather than a full-verse parallel. The example of *Maldon*'s 'garberend' (262a) is worth noting in this context. As a lexical item, 'garberend' is paralleled only in *Exodus* (231a, 'garberendra,' a full-verse compound) and nowhere else in Old English. But it seems more likely that the *Maldon* poet derived the word not from *Exodus*, but rather from a verse used twice in *Andreas*:

Mald 262a: grame garberend

And 47a, 1076a: eorre æsberend

Both verses mean 'angry spear-bearer,' and the *Maldon* example seems simply to substitute a set of alliterating alternatives into the *Andreas* verse. The *Maldon* poet apparently used a similar strategy to compose verse 237a, 'gar and godswurd,' which must be an alliterative variant based upon *Judith* 317a, 'bord ond bradswyrd,' a verse which was also used without change in *Maldon* 15a. The likelihood that the *Maldon* poet himself composed 'gar and godswurd' is perhaps indicated by the pedestrian quality of the compound 'godswurd.'⁴⁹ In both cases, the composition of apparently 'new' poetic compounds can still be easily understood as expressions of the *Maldon* poet's

borrowing tactics.

Table 3.14 Unique Parallels between *Maldon* and Other ASPR Poems

<i>Maldon</i>	analogue	reverse
72b: A119b2	francas (spear) hlude	
230B, 290a	Aðhamge mædaelde	
690A: 90	lits wāt mīc witasne wæs	
210A: 268a	awinerumingeong	
262B1	ragarbandend	
282B9	ærsefbīndes lærig	
21a: 47a	fæst fæst folc folmum ^a	
291: 801a	328b forige	end unforhte
143a: 5a	567a	þær dægweorces ^b
54a: 685a	folc fōldafoldan ^c	
A7a, 285a	Næfliciaic sælidan	
96a: 140a	swa hit wælvilfas	
A20b: 34b	chær sægde	
A47b: 469b	Mege den panc ^d	
A05a: 102a	þe ge eþra geþroðor	
278B0	forfolc landseor	
1406b	Se ymige wæpþyllþiðra	
56b: 95b	þe slæh læssferwunde wīðerlean	
577a: 940	in ge wīdgewod	
GuthB 1028a	: wærc in gewod	
185385i	: huggan þrōmbeadauwe	
268169a	: gewerplegan wigplegan	
15a: 310a	bod bods warts wyrd	
107210a	: neasesæge georn	
B2a: 35b	: dnyngewagewat	
B2a: 116a	: wælvilfa worhtan ^e	

- Compare PPs 68.5 2a ‘fæstum folmum.’
- The compound ‘dægweorc’ is also used in *Ex* 151a and *El* 146a and also appears twice in Wulfstan’s works.
- Compare PPs 76.12 2a, ‘folcum on foldan’ and *Seasons* 187a, ‘folce gynd foldan.’
- Compare *Sat* 550a, ‘secgan drihtne panc’
- We might in addition note these unusual words in *Maldon*: the simplex ‘geneaf’ which other wise appears in verse only in *GenB*

284a, but is more frequent in prose; ‘heregeatu,’ which appears elsewhere in the ASPR only in *Met*25 9a and *MSol* 52b, but more frequently in prose; and ‘æschere’ which elsewhere is found only in *Beowulf* where, of course, it is a proper name. *Maldon*’s ‘æschere’ may then either derive from *Beowulf* or be the *Maldon* poet’s own compound.

Even when the *Maldon* poet’s ability to coin compounds is taken into consideration, the evidence presented in [Table 3.14](#) remains striking. Full-line and half-line parallels (Tables 3.12 and 3.14) suggest that the *Maldon* poet knew *Brunanburh* and *Elene* as well as *Beowulf*, while half-line parallels and lexical parallels suggest his knowledge of *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Genesis A* as well. Indeed, given a half-line parallel in the *Soul and Body* poems, we might conclude that the *Maldon* poet knew the Vercelli version (*Soul and Body I*), since he also seems to have known *Andreas* and *Elene* but (like the author of the *Æthelwoldian* poems discussed above) shows relatively little evidence of having known any poems from the Exeter Book.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is important to note that *Maldon* shows one or more unique parallels with the Vercelli poems *Andreas*, *Soul and Body I*, and *Elene*; the Nowell poems *Beowulf* and *Judith*; and the Junius poems *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, and *Christ and Satans*.⁵¹ In short, if we can use *Maldon* to attempt to reconstruct the *Maldon* poet’s reading, it seems that he very likely knew three of the four collections that survive today in their present form.⁵²

The *Maldon* poet’s apparent knowledge of these books, I think, should be compared to the range of poems seemingly known to the author of *The Menologium*. Both poets, it seems, had little if any access to (or reliance upon) poems now preserved in the Exeter book. Both seem well acquainted with *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, and probably *Judith* and *Elene* as well, while the poet of *Maldon* clearly seems to have known *Brunanburh* and perhaps *Solomon and Saturn*, although he made no certain use of *The Metrical Psalms*, which might simply stem from the fact that they are comparatively light in battle imagery. But since the *Menologium* poet showed no certain knowledge of any of the Junius poems except *Genesis A* and *B*, except possibly two parallels with verses in *Daniel*, the evidence from *Maldon* suggests that the Junius collection’s Liber I as a whole may not have been given its present shape until the late tenth century: not only was the Liber

II addition of *Christ and Satan* a late one, but the *Genesis* poems may not have been associated with *Daniel* or *Exodus* until very near the production of the Junius book itself, which would explain why the *Menologium* poet made use of *Genesis A* but not *Exodus*. Except for this difference, however, the *Maldon* poet seems largely to have had access to virtually the same collection of poems as the *Menologium* poet. The *Maldon* poet, too, may possibly have been located at Winchester, although a scattering of apparent eastern spellings perhaps suggests at least an eastern background.⁵³

In their shared anonymity and through their method of building their poems on the basis of formulas borrowed from earlier works, both of these late tenth-century poets live up to the command of the St Petersburg maxim, closely following their exemplars in the absence of superior knowledge. And in the case of the *Menologium* poet especially, but probably the *Maldon* poet as well, the attempt to write poems of classical style was apparently made in full knowledge of the ascendancy of the late Old English verse exemplified in *The Metrical Psalms*. These poets, rather than following the newer trends, attempted to preserve the classical tradition in their own compositions, and their method of doing so seems to have involved an active and remarkably thorough search for rare and unusual words and verses. It is our good fortune that the results of those searches open the door for us to reconstruct their reading.

Conclusions

The poems considered in this chapter include all of the classical Old English poetry that can be ascribed with confidence to an origin between 950 and 1000.⁵⁴ The arguments I have presented suggest that the classical verse tradition during this period was anything but a living oral tradition, but rather was subject to an antiquarian interest perhaps not too different from the Benedictine Reformers' interest in the works of Aldhelm. The compositional methods employed in these late tenth-century poems demonstrably involve the reuse of rare words and verses that suggests that they (alongside many more widely attested verses) derive not from access to a living tradition of oral composition, but rather to a process of data-mining and

borrowing, in which older poems contributed their phrasing and diction to the new compositions, regardless of whether their contributions were common poetic currency or individual and idiosyncratic words and expressions (or even, as in the case of *Maldon* 230a, ‘Offa gemælde,’ imported from another language entirely). In short, this compositional method marks these works as deriving from what can only be described as a specialized kind of authorial practice, one which allows at least the tentative attribution of some of these works to influential figures or their schools, precisely because the composers of these tenth-century classical poems employ both common formulas and vanishingly rare words and expressions, just as if they could not tell the two apart, or cared not to.

Precisely because the authors of *Riddle 40*, the *Chronicle* poems and *The Menologium*, and *The Battle of Maldon* all engage in somewhat different metrical practices and because they each have access to somewhat different sets of probable source-texts, we can at least tentatively associate the author of *Riddle 40* with Dunstan and Glastonbury, adding support to the recent argument that the Exeter collection might well itself derive from Glastonbury. In part, the attribution of *Riddle 40* to Dunstan’s circle is possible because of the numerous contextual hints that link *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems to Æthelwold and his own interests and access (the concern with the English ecclesiastical year in *The Menologium*; the close linkage to Edgar and his coronation, as seen in the *Chronicle* poems; the Royal Psalter scholion’s possible knowledge of *Beowulf* and its likely distinction between ‘g’ alliterators; the plausibility of locating the Alfredian library and the Parker Chronicle at Winchester). Such connections make it virtually impossible to conclude that the author of *Riddle 40* might have also been at Winchester, and thus the very differences between the two sets of texts support the separate Æthelwoldian and Dunstanian attributions; of course, the preservation of *Riddle 40* and these other poems in such different locations also suggests that they were probably composed in different physical locations.

Any attempt to locate the *Maldon* poet, however, must be even more speculative, and a Canterbury origin can probably not be ruled out. For reasons that are not entirely clear, there seems to have been at least some movement of books moving from

Winchester to Canterbury around the end of the tenth century (including both the Royal Psalter and the Parker Chronicle), especially if the Junius collection itself originated in Canterbury, as has often been supposed.⁵⁵ The collection of classical Old English poems into large books around the end of the tenth century has often been noted, and the *Maldon* poet's notably broad range of probable sources may reflect a relatively late stage in the assembly of the great poetic collections, especially the Junius manuscript. Further, as I suggested above, the copying of classical poetic manuscripts may itself have been prompted by the ascendancy of the collecting mood of the Reformers, much as the majority of surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of that other favourite, Aldhelm's prose *De uirginitate*, also derive from the decades around 1000. The Benedictine Reform's intellectual investment in poetic matters, it turns out, may provide the clearest context for the ultimate survival of classical Old English verse. And as we shall see in chapter 4, Ælfric's own characteristic style may be intimately wrapped up with his well-known rejection of the opacities and difficulties of style associated with so many of the compositions of the Benedictine Reform movement.

All of my discussion about the possible identities of the authors of some of these poems, of course, is made necessary by the fact that these tenth-century classical poets continued to present their works in a state of textual anonymity, although many of the early readers of these poems were likely to have known who their authors were. If the recycling of old poetic words and phrases in itself expressed a veneration for the traditions and language of Old English verse, the continued presentation of even the newest compositions as anonymous must have had much the same effect. Nowhere is this clearer, perhaps, than in the case of *Riddle 40*, which seems to have been introduced into the Exeter collection, with no indication that its textual origins might have differed from any of the other *Riddles*, or, indeed, any of the other Exeter poems. Like *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, where some of the poems considered here were destined to appear, a collection like the Exeter Book may well have been understood as a grand collaborative enterprise, in which the names of individual contributors were unnecessary and even, in some sense, unwelcome. But it is equally possible to suggest that the

gathering of poems into the 'four great codices' around the turn of the millennium was not a matter of publication at all, but rather served a function of preservation or simple provision of access: the anonymity of these books and poems, in the end, may simply be related to a perception of their audiences as, ultimately, local.

4 What Has Ælfric to Do with *Maldon*?

The opening lines of Ælfric's *Letter to Wulfgeat* are printed in Assmann's edition as follows:

Ic Ælfric abbod on ðisum Engliscum gewrite
freondlice grete mid godes gretinge
Wulfget æt Ylmandune!

(*Letter to Wulfgeat*, Assmann I, 1-3a)

(I, Abbot Ælfric, in this English writing, greet Wulfgeat at Ylmandune in a friendly manner, with God's greeting.)

Here, Ælfric names himself directly, within his text, in a fashion that might recall the apparent self-naming seen in Alfred's and Wulfsgie's respective *Metrical Prefaces*, while also specifying a singular, named intended audience. Especially in comparison to his own prefaces (which are usually aimed at a broader, multiple audience), a passage like this one clearly indicates that Ælfric's textual self-naming is not directly linked to whether he perceives his audience as singular or multiple, although his specification of Wulfgeat's location at Ylmandune may hint that Ælfric may understand naming as especially important for distant, non-local audiences.¹ In any case, Ælfric's habits of self-naming could hardly be more different from the anonymous textual practices of the tenth-century classical poets considered in [chapter 3](#).

Remarkable as it is, however, Ælfric's naming of himself in these texts and in his various prefaces cannot really tell us as much as we might wish, because his practice stands so far out of the mainstream for Old English texts from any period. Although his contemporaries Wulfstan the Homilist and Byrhtferth of Ramsey also seem to have attached their own names to at least some of their vernacular writings, the vast majority of both prose and verse texts from both earlier and later were presented without authorial attribution in Old English manuscripts. In his authorial self-identification, as in so much else, Ælfric stands out

as exceptional.

The question of whether Ælfric's alliterative works are best seen as prose or verse is, therefore, an issue quite distinct from the challenges posed by his unusual status as a named author. Yet the question about the generic identity of these alliterative works is clearly an important one, and not a mere terminological triviality for modern readers. I strongly suspect that the more we are inclined to see the Anglo-Saxon period as an era characterized by a powerful oral/aural component within its texts, the less complacent we should be with any interpretive paradigm that claims there is a meaningful middle ground between prose and verse during the period. Certainly, Anglo-Saxon prose texts could make use of poeticisms of varying sorts (see below), while verse texts could be prosaic in various degrees, but neither circumstance necessarily erases the essential boundary line between prose and verse.

In the case of Ælfric's alliterative works in particular, the question of their generic identity continues, I think it is fair to say, to be an open one. In previous works, for example, I have proposed a metrical argument for seeing Ælfric's alliterative works as verse, pointing out along the way that the punctuation of some key Ælfric manuscripts looks suspiciously like the metrical pointing of verse ('Late Old English Verse'; *Early English Metre*). At virtually the same time, however, the case for Ælfric as a specifically prose stylist has received renewed attention from both Haruko Momma ('Rhythm and Alliteration') and Bruce Mitchell ('The Relation'). The practical aspects of the problem have not escaped recent editors, either: the 'metrical' lineation used by Assmann in the quotation above was of course that used by Skeat in his edition of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* as well as by Pope (*Supplementary Collection*) and, more recently, Susan Irvine (*Homilies from Bodley 343*), while Malcolm Godden uses a proselike layout for the second series of the *Catholic Homilies*, a practice followed by Mary Clayton in her recent edition of the *Letter to Brother Edward*, although she notes that Pope had '[set] out the second section metrically' (264, note 11). Paul Szarmach, in 'Abbot Ælfric's Rhythmical Prose,' has usefully summarized the history of editorial decisions regarding the lineation of Ælfrician alliterative works, suggesting that digital editions might offer readers a choice of layouts. But if one of the central defining

differences between verse and prose is the presence or absence of line-based structural units, these editorial choices themselves reflect the continuing critical uncertainty about how to understand Ælfric's alliterative compositions. In this chapter, I hope to come at the question from a slightly different angle, one at least in part influenced by my discussions of classical Old English verse in the preceding chapters. What Ælfric has to do with *Maldon*, I will suggest, is more than we are conventionally used to thinking: Ælfric's rhythmical style has more in common with the tradition of Old English verse (including even classical Old English verse) than modern readers seem to have recognized.

We might begin by considering the remarkable appearance of the word 'franca' in Ælfric's *Depositio Sancti Basilii Episcopi*: 'Ða stod his franca bær. fula be-gleddod' (Then his spear stood there, stained foully; *LS* III, 266). A rare word, 'franca' means 'spear' or 'lance' only five times in Old English: here in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, once in *Genesis A* (1982a), twice in *Maldon* (77b, 140b), and once in the will of Æthelric (Whitelock, *Wills*, no. XVI). Strikingly, the fact that three of these five occurrences occur in the closely contemporary works *Lives of Saints* and *The Battle of Maldon* suggests the possibility of a connection between those works, if only at the level of unusual diction.

But the rarity of 'franca' also clarifies some of what is at stake in the question of the generic identity of Ælfric's works. If we identify Ælfric as a prose writer, then 'franca' is a word used roughly as often in prose (twice) as in verse (three times); if we see the alliterative *Lives* as poetry, then 'franca' is probably best seen as a primarily poetic word with limited (in this case unique) usage in prose. As this example suggests, the frequent claim that Ælfric fails to use poetic vocabulary is potentially undermined if (as, for example, Clark Hall and Meritt's dictionary has insisted) Ælfric is identified as a prose writer in an a priori fashion.² The troublingly circular logic is all too clear: once Ælfric has been identified as a prose writer, the words he uses are (by definition) not restricted to poetry, and thus his alliterative texts must fail to exhibit the poetic diction that has often been cited as definitive of Old English poetry.

Yet the analysis of tenth-century classical Old English poems undertaken in the preceding chapter suggests that much of the traditional poetic diction may have been, by Ælfric's day,

troublingly archaic, accessible to writers like the *Maldon* poet primarily through painstaking searches among the manuscripts of older poems and working with the formulas, verses, and lines found therein. Ælfric's own preference for a simple style is well established, and his general avoidance of much typical 'poetic' diction might well be related to perceptions of its archaicism and general inaccessibility. It is at least possible that Ælfric simply wrote poetry with a different sense of what sort of diction was appropriate. It is even possible to suspect that Ælfric, writing at Cerne Abbas and Eynsham, had no access to larger collections of classical Old English poetry, even if he may have been exposed to some Old English verse while being taught at Winchester by Æthelwold.³ Even if Ælfric might have wanted to compose classical verse in the mode described in the previous chapter, he would presumably have been hindered from doing so if his library lacked the proper poetic resources.

It is possible to at least begin to tease out the implications of such a scenario by considering Ælfric's own writings. On the question of his access to manuscripts of Old English poetry during his productive years as a writer, we might consider his version of the opening of Psalm 100 ('Misericordium et iudicium cantabo tibi, Domine') as it appears in the thirteenth homily in Pope's collection:

Ic singe þe, Drihten, soðe mildheortnysse,
and swiðe rihtne dom þe ðu gedemest mannum

(adapted from Pope, *SC* II, XIII, 74-5)

(I sing to you, Lord, the true mercy and the very proper
judgment by which you judge men).

By contrast, the *Metrical Psalms* version reads as follows:

Mildheortnesse and dom mihtigan drihtnes
singe and secge, and soð ongyte

(*PPs* 100.1 1-2)

(I sing and speak the mercy and judgment of the powerful
Lord, and true understanding).

Clearly the two translations are quite independent, but several

points deserve to be made here. First, Ælfric's initial half-line is very similar to a number of a-lines in *The Metrical Psalms*, including the (non-classical) way that the verb alliterates in preference to the noun 'Drihten'; for close parallels, see *Metrical Psalms* 54.21.1a, 55.1.1a, 69.1.2a, 83.8.1a, 85.3.1a, 85.10.1a, 104.4.1a, 105.4.1a, 131.1.1a, 134.3.1a, 136.7.1a, 139.4.1a, and 146.1.1a. Indeed, all of Ælfric's metrical peculiarities in this passage can be paralleled directly in *The Metrical Psalms*. Alliteration, for example, is delayed to the last syllable of the verse with some frequency in *The Metrical Psalms*, and to Ælfric's 'soðe mildheortnysse,' we should compare *Psalms* 108.21.2a, 'mycle mildheortnesse.' And to Ælfric's classically impossible 'þe ðu gedemest mannum' compare *Psalms* 113.5.2b, 'for hwi gengdest on bæcling.' It is notable, too, that both Ælfric and the Psalmist insert forms of 'soð' into their texts (where no equivalent is present in the Latin) to provide an alliterative link to 'singē.' The methods and metre of the two translators are remarkably similar.

In short, absolutely nothing in Ælfric's version of the opening of Psalm 100 seems like it would be out of place in *The Metrical Psalms*. At this point, we might compare the comments of Peter Clemoes:

I am not suggesting that there was any direct link between Ælfric's prose and the Paris Psalter's metrical version of the psalms, but I think that there is little doubt that Ælfric derived his basic rhythmical scheme from poetry of this kind. ('Ælfric' 202-3)

Clemoes goes on to quote a passage from *The Metrical Psalms*, indicating that Ælfric's alliterative works are 'not far removed from such poetry' (203). Insofar as Ælfric does not quote from *The Metrical Psalms* when he cites from the psalms, it might be possible to suggest that he was, indeed, somewhat 'removed from such poetry' in a literal and physical sense; in his version of the beginning of Psalm 100, it seems almost as if Ælfric is intentionally replicating the style of *The Metrical Psalms*, but without having access to a manuscript of them from which he could simply quote.

It would, of course, be difficult to prove Ælfric's lack of access to something, but what I largely hope to suggest in this chapter is

that we can understand most, if not all, features of Ælfric's characteristic alliterative style as the product of an Æthelwoldian education in the grounding of Old English poetry as practised by a scholar who became, later in life, separated from the grand library of poetry that I have hypothesized as surviving at Winchester. In the following sections, I undertake a reexamination of Ælfric's style in his alliterative works, focusing on the issues of alliteration, poetic diction, and formulaic composition. And in a final section of the chapter, I take up the possibility, raised by the markedly infrequent occurrence of 'franca' in Old English, that Ælfric borrowed this word directly from his contemporary, the *Maldon* poet. The conclusions drawn in this chapter will, I hope, greatly clarify just how much Ælfric knew of Old English verse and how it did – and did not – influence him.

Ælfric's Alliteration

It goes without saying that Ælfric's alliterative compositions make use of alliteration, but it is important to account precisely for how his alliterative practices do and do not correspond to the practices of tenth-century Old English verse. Specifically (as with the poems discussed in the preceding chapter), it is especially important to address how Ælfric treats 's-' clusters and palatal and velar 'g.'

We can begin by considering Pope's comments on 's-' clusters in his influential description of Ælfric's style:

Ælfric allows *sc*, *sp*, and *st* to alliterate with one another and with *s* followed by a vowel or any other consonant, though with *st* especially he seems to prefer exact correspondence. The alliteration of *sc* and *s* has been observed in the metrical psalms, and Ælfric may be reflecting, or exaggerating, a tendency of late Old English poetry. (Pope I, 128-9)

In my reading of Ælfric, this comment seems exactly right in its account of 's' alliteration in Ælfric. Notably (as Pope's comments suggest) Ælfric's treatment of initial 's' and 's-' clusters differs not only from the alliterative rules of classical verse, but also from the practice of *The Metrical Psalms* (where 'st-' and 'sp-' remain separate alliterators) and from the practice of the *Maldon* poet,

who treated all 's-' clusters as separate alliterators.⁴ Yet it may still be possible to understand Ælfric's practice here in the context of tenth-century verse. If Ælfric had, in fact, known *The Metrical Psalms* at one point, he might well have derived the co-alliteration of 's-' and 'sc-' from them. Conversely, the *Chronicle* poems (which were presumably available at Winchester) may have given him justification for essentially treating the 's-' portion of all 's-' clusters as the key alliterator. Alliteration involving the classical 's-' clusters is notably infrequent in the relevant poems, and only two lines from *Brunanburh*, *Capture*, *Coronation*, *Death of Edgar*, and *The Menologium* are at issue:

Capt 7: and Snotingaham swylce Stanford eac

DEdg 30: steorra on staðole þone stiðferhbe

While the author of these *Chronicle* poems may well have intended to follow classical alliterative practice, bending the rules only to accommodate the names in *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*, a later writer like Ælfric might well have concluded that his practice was to treat all 's-' clusters as alliterating with one another, although with a preference for exact matching, perhaps 'with *st* especially.' Formulaic evidence considered below hints that Ælfric did, in fact, have access to these poems, indicating the plausibility of this sort of influence. In the end, although Ælfric's alliterative treatment of 's-' clusters differs from the tenth-century poets who preceded him, his practice actually seems to combine aspects of their separate habits. In its differences from prior poetic practices, Ælfric's treatment of 's' alliteration is not so much a departure from earlier examples as a synthesis of them.

Pope is less certain, however, about Ælfric's habits in relation to the two pronunciations of 'g,' writing:

Ælfric's treatment of palatal and guttural g tends, I think, toward the separation of the two sounds that has been observed in *Maldon*. Nearly always the guttural sound alliterates with itself only, and the palatal, which is much rarer as a stave in most homilies, may be similarly set apart. But there are sometimes mixtures of the two, and I think it is probable that Ælfric was familiar with the older convention and sometimes availed himself of it. The matter has not been carefully studied, and conclusions

are hard to reach because of the rarity of examples. (I, 130-1)

Despite his hesitation, Pope's basic position is almost surely correct: palatal and velar 'g' are separate alliterators for Ælfric, and examples are fairly common.⁵ The following passage from Ælfric's *St Maur* offers a useful example:

þa weop se cyning.
and þancode gode his godan wyllan.
and tihte hine georn *þæt* he geornful wære.
on þam gastlican life and on godes þeow-dome.

(adapted from Skeat, *LS* VI, 247b-50)

(Then the king wept, and thanked God for his good will, and urged him eagerly that he be diligent in the spiritual life and in the service of God.)

The lines that seem most strongly to suggest co-alliteration of the two sounds usually involve a proper name, three potential alliterators, or potential cross alliteration. Given the categorical alliterative freedom allowed to lines with proper names, it seems simplest to conclude that the two sounds are regularly distinguished by Ælfric, and that lines with a third alliterator or possible cross alliteration do not show co-alliteration of the two 'g's. Ælfric's practice in relation to palatal and velar 'g,' then, corresponds not only with the practice of *Maldon* (as noted by Pope), but also with the practice of the *Chronicle/Menologium* poet as well, as described in [chapter 3](#). Here, too, Ælfric's alliterative practices fall within the range of tenth-century practices, and they correspond especially closely to the alliterative practices of the 'Æthelwoldian' poems identified in [chapter 3](#), perhaps offering additional support for the Æthelwoldian attribution, given Ælfric's status as Æthelwold's student. It is worth recalling, once again, that most late Old English poetry appears to treat the two forms of 'g' as alliterating with one another, and that Ælfric's practice does serve to associate his works with the particular strand of poetic composition that I tentatively associated with Æthelwold in [chapter 3](#).

It is likewise important to recall that if, indeed, *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* poems were composed at

Æthelwold's Winchester, *The Metrical Psalms* was likely to have been available there as well, since *The Menologium* quotes from the *Psalms*. If Ælfric's alliterative practice relates most closely to *The Metrical Psalms* and the *Chronicle* poems, that would suggest that Ælfric was most familiar with the practices of the most contemporary poetry available, rather than (like the *Menologium* poet or the *Maldon* poet) immersing himself in the older classical tradition. Certainly, there is nothing inherently implausible in such a possibility, and although this prospect corresponds well with what we have seen of Ælfric's own translation of the beginning of Psalm 100, more evidence would clearly still be welcome. I turn next to the vexed issue of Ælfric's diction.

'Poetic' Words in Ælfric

The peculiarities of Ælfric's diction have often been remarked upon. Malcolm Godden, in his important essay 'Ælfric's Changing Vocabulary,' discusses a number of 'words which Ælfric introduced as part of his experiment with alliteration' (219), including 'metod' and 'heolstor,' although noting that many of these words 'had a very short life' in Ælfric's writings and were sometimes even expunged in his later revisions (*ibid.*). In a more recent study, 'Poetic Words in Late Old English Prose,' Roberta Frank discusses further two more poetic words in Ælfrician texts: 'folde' and 'folme.' In his *Introduction* Godden notes also Ælfric's use of 'other unusual diction' (xxxvii), including 'molde,' 'rodor,' and 'unman.' Most recently, Mechthild Gretsch has considered the poetic component of the language in Ælfric's Cuthbert homily, concluding that 'Ælfric not only experimented with a distinctive prose rhythm, but simultaneously attempted to develop a form of diction, if not poetic, yet more formal and ornate than ordinary prose' (*Cult of Saints* 116). Gretsch's understanding of Ælfric's style as a prose style, obviously, prevents her from concluding that Ælfric's verse-like rhythms and poetic vocabulary together point to the poetic nature of his style, but her observations certainly could be taken to suggest that conclusion as well.

The Cuthbert homily that Gretsch considers, of course, is usually seen as Ælfric's first extended effort in his new alliterative style (see Godden, *Introduction* 412). Taking Gretsch's comments in conjunction with Godden's observation that Ælfric later

eradicated some of the most typically poetic vocabulary from his works, it seems plausible to suggest that as Ælfric grew more accustomed to composing in his characteristic style he gradually eradicated the more difficult aspects of it, including its occasional use of words otherwise largely restricted to poetry. Such a shift, of course, would be completely understandable if traditional poetic diction had, in fact, become archaic and unfamiliar by the end of the tenth century. But the question of where, exactly, Ælfric might have learned this poetic diction in the first place has not, as far as I am aware, been discussed; presumably, scholars anticipate that he learned it from exposure to a continuing oral tradition of Old English verse.

At least one of the words identified by Godden and Frank is worth our attention here because its distribution in verse is interestingly restricted: 'heolstor,' identified by Godden as an early and rare poetic word used by Ælfric, happens not to appear in *The Metrical Psalms*, *The Menologium*, or the *Chronicle* poems, but it does, in fact, have a prominent presence in the apparently Æthelwoldian Aldhelm glosses discussed by Gretsche (though she does not address this word in particular).⁶ The word is, it should be pointed out, used very occasionally in other prose works, so Ælfric's source for the word probably cannot be certain, but it is worth noting that Ælfric's Winchester education may well have involved crucial learning about Old English poetic words separate from *The Metrical Psalms* and the works of the *Menologium* poet; that such learning might well have involved the Aldhelm glosses discussed by Gretsche is certainly an intriguing possibility, given what we know of Ælfric's Winchester education.

As examples such as this one suggest, a full investigation of Ælfric's vocabulary is a worthwhile goal, but one that is unfortunately impossible here because of the size of the undertaking it would require. We might begin a reassessment of Ælfric's diction, however, by considering his use of compounds. Since a number of metrical feet in classical Old English verse had both full-stress and half-stress levels (e.g., Ss, Ssx, Sxs), compounds were a striking feature of classical diction; the comparative lack of importance for such 'compound feet' in late Old English verse is in large part responsible for the gradual diminishing of the importance of compounds in later verse (see my *Early English Metre* 72-4). Compounds, nevertheless, do make

up an important component of Ælfric's diction in his rhythmical works.⁷ Looking at only two of the items collected in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* (*Maccabees* and *The Passion of Edmund*), we find a number of compounds with notably restricted distributions in the surviving Old English corpus. Because the subject matter of both deals so much with warfare, these two works seem like appropriate places to look for potentially poetic diction, and they do not disappoint.⁸ Unusual compounds from *Maccabees* and *The Passion of Edmund* include the following: 'ræd-fæst,' 'heahþegn,' 'fyrdlaf,' 'scyldtrum,' 'weorcstan,' 'herelaf,' 'flotman,' 'woruldcempa,' 'flothere,' and 'eorðfæst.'⁹ It seems appropriate to consider the distribution of each item in some detail.

1 'fyrdlaf' and 'herelaf.' Old English 'fyrdlaf' is attested only twice, in Ælfric's *Maccabees* (LS XXV) 377b and *De Populo Israhel* (Pope 20) 214b. 'Herelaf' is somewhat more frequent, with an attestation in *Brunanburh* 47a, nine separate appearances in Ælfric's alliterative works, one occurrence in the Old English life of St Neot, and one occurrence in a gloss.¹⁰ The gloss, significantly, is from Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, although not appearing in the Brussels, Bibliotheque Royale, manuscript 1650 glosses that Gretsche suggests are tied most closely to Æthelwold himself (though Gretsche does not discuss this word in particular). The Bosworth-Toller dictionary lists '-laf' as the second element of the following additional compounds: 'egelaƿ' (*Exodus* 370b; ASPR prints the manuscript reading 'ece laƿ' so 'egelaƿ' is in fact now unattested); 'endelaƿ' (unique: *Beo* 2813a); 'eormenlaƿ' (unique: *Beo* 2234a); 'husellaƿ' (unique: Ælfric's *Letter to Wulfſige*, Fehr I, §122); 'metelaƿ' (four occurrences: three in prose, one in a gloss); 'ſælaƿ' (one occurrence as a proper name, else unique: *Ex* 585a); 'wealaƿ' (four occurrences: *Beo* 1084a, 1098a; *Metl* 22a; Wulfſtan/Bethurum homily XIX, line 70); 'yðlaƿ' (*Ex* 586a; *Beowulf* 566a); and 'yrfeƿ' (*Ex* 403b; *Beo* 1053a, 1903a; *PPs* 77.70 2b).¹¹ Except for 'metelaƿ' and its three prose occurrences, the remainder of the '-laf' compounds would support the identification of the whole series as belonging to the system of poetic compounds.

2 'flothere' and 'flotman.' Old English 'flothere' occurs only twice, in Ælfric's *Passion of Edmund* (LS XXXII) 130a and in *Beowulf* 2915a (where Klaeber's glossary identifies it as a poetic word, while the more recent *Klaeber's Beowulf* editors specify it as a

word for which ‘closely related words occur in other poetic texts or in prose’; 343). ‘Flotman’ (besides being used five times in glosses or glossaries) appears in *Genesis A* 1475a; *Maccabees* (LS XXV) 708a; *Edmund* (LS XXXII) 70a, 77b, 119b, and 139a; and (in two different versions of) Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (Bethurum XX(C), 108, and XX(EI), 111).¹² Given Wulfstan’s own occasional use of poetic words, both these words too might easily be identified as poetic compounds, especially as the date of Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi* suggests that he may have borrowed ‘flotman’ directly from Ælfric. Note again that the uses of ‘flotman’ in glosses occur in glosses to Aldhelm’s prose *De uirginitate*, and thus may derive from Æthelwold or the ‘Aldhelm seminar’ discussed by Gretsche (*Intellectual Foundations*).

- 3 ‘heahbegn.’ This word is used mostly in Ælfric: once in the ASPR poem *Daniel* (442a); six times in Ælfric’s alliterative works: *St George* (LS XIV) 181b; *Maccabees* (LS XXV) 330b; *Martin* (LS XXXI) 506a, 574b; *De Falsis Diis* (Pope XXI) 301a; *Judith* (Assmann IX) 283a; and once in the second series of *Catholic Homilies* (Godden, *Catholic Homilies: Second Series [CH II]* XXXV, 4), where the paragraph in question is probably intended to be alliterative.¹³ The restriction of the word to poetry and Ælfric’s alliterative works is again notable.
- 4 ‘rædfæst.’ This word has twenty-three occurrences in Old English: six in the ASPR, fourteen in the alliterative works of Ælfric, one in a Wulfstan homily, one in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (annal 1019D), and one in a gloss to the *Liber Scintillarum*.¹⁴
- 5 ‘scyldtruma.’ Although well attested in glosses (seven examples, with various spellings), this word is attested in connected discourse only in Ælfric’s *Maccabees* (LS XXV), 423a.¹⁵ The uses of the word in glosses are associated with Aldhelm’s prose *De uirginitate*, though not restricted to Brussels 1650.
- 6 ‘weorcstan.’ This compound appears twenty times in Old English, fourteen times in Ælfric. Eleven of the Ælfrician usages are in alliterative passages, one is in the glossary attached to Ælfric’s *Grammar*, and there is one appearance each in *Catholic Homilies* series I and II, compared to seven in *Lives of Saints*. ‘Weorcstan’ is used in one charter (Sawyer 1110), and

five times in the anonymous *Seven Sleepers* homily, which may well have been influenced by Ælfric (see [chapter 5](#) below).¹⁶

7 ‘woruldcempa.’ This word appears only four times in Old English: twice in Ælfric’s *Maccabees* (in the ‘Oratores, Laboratores, Bellatores’ appendix (LS XXV) 802a and 827a), once in his *Martin* (LS XXXI) 1066a, and once in *Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem* (Norman) 36.¹⁷ All three of these works are, of course, alliterative.

8 ‘eorðfæst.’ Although this compound would seem likely to be common in Old English, it actually appears only twice, in Ælfric’s *Passion of Edmund* (LS XXXII) 109a and *On Auguries* (LS XVII) 130a, both alliterative works.¹⁸

As these examples suggest, a significant number of compounds that are found in *Maccabees* and *The Passion of Edmund* have restricted distributions. It is probably important to note that we should not simply label such words ‘Ælfrician,’ since (with the exceptions noted) they do not generally appear in his normal prose compositions but are restricted to or most common in his alliterative works. And when we consider these words alongside the poetic vocabulary identified and discussed by Godden, Frank, and Gretsche in Ælfric’s alliterative works, as well as simplexes like ‘franca’ and those discussed above in note 9, the amount of poetic or potentially poetic diction in Ælfric’s works seems substantial. A fuller consideration of Ælfric’s diction across a broader spectrum of works would presumably bring even more relevant examples to light.

On the one hand, it seems important to note that, for the words identified here with the most restricted occurrence, Ælfric’s potential sources in *Brunanburh*, *Beowulf*, *Daniel*, *Genesis A*, and the presumably Æthelwoldian Aldhelm glosses are strikingly consonant with the hypothesis advanced in [chapter 3](#) that all of those works could be located in Winchester in the middle and late tenth century, precisely where and when Ælfric was educated. Again, while proof is unlikely to be available, it is at least plausible to suggest that Ælfric may have learned this poetic vocabulary while at school in Winchester. Secondly, however, it is important to recognize that the use of poetic words was a characteristic of tenth- (and eleventh-) century homilies in general; Don Chapman’s essay ‘Poetic Compounding’, for

example, identifies ‘twenty-two compounds whose only occurrence outside the [Vercelli, Blickling, and Wulfstan] homilies is in poetry’ (410). Like these earlier and contemporary homilists, Ælfric seems also to have used poetic compounding for stylistic ends in his works, but it no longer seems to be clear that, as E.G. Stanley stated: ‘To be verse [a text or passage] must contain some items recognizable by us as from the language of Old English poetry’ (*Judgement*’ 368). Diction, it seems, is unlikely to shed much light on whether Ælfric felt himself to be composing in verse or prose, but his use of poetic diction, and compounds in particular, does show him to have been conscious of the impact of his word choices, and may well suggest that he was familiar with at least part of the poetic tradition, especially as it seems to have been understood or known at Winchester.

Ælfric’s ‘Formulaic’ Composition

Ælfric was certainly acquainted with at least some examples of Old English verse. His alliterative practice (as I suggested above) was probably derived more or less directly from earlier tenth-century practices, and he may also have borrowed some of his ‘poetic’ diction directly from poetic models. His comments about St Thomas at the end of item XXXIV in the *Catholic Homilies: Second Series* indicate his knowledge of at least one Old English poem:

Thomes ðrowunge
we forlætað unawritene. for ðan ðe heo wæs gefyrn awend.
of ledene on engisc on leoðwison

(adapted from Godden, *CH II XXXIV*, part 2, 7-9)

(The passion of Thomas we leave unwritten, because it was translated before from Latin into English in the manner of a song [or poem].)

Indeed, this passage is especially important for its suggestion that, as far as Ælfric is concerned, the poetic version of Thomas’s passion that Ælfric has in mind would apparently serve a purpose for Ælfric’s readers identical to the kind of text Ælfric himself might prepare for the *Catholic Homilies*. Of course, such a

comment does nothing to prove that Ælfric did write verse, but it does suggest unequivocally that he has no antipathy toward verse and no expectation that verse will not serve his purposes. We might well ask if his own works were composed in a fashion similar to the tenth-century examples we have seen: did Ælfric compose by recycling formulas and diction from poetic examples?

Even a casual reading of Ælfric's alliterative works reveals their extensive debt to the concept of formulaic composition.¹⁹ As a brief demonstration, it is useful to examine here the formulaic analogues of just the first five lines of Ælfric's *Passion of St Edmund*, using the kind of analysis employed in formulaic studies of Old English verse. The passage in question should be familiar:

EADMUND SE EADIGA EASTENGLA CYNINC
wæs snotor and wurðful. and wurðode symble
mid æþelum þeawum þone ælmihtigan god.
He wæs ead-mod. and geþungen. and swa an-ræde þurh-
wunode
þæt he nolde abugan to bysmorfullum Leahtrum.

(adapted from Skeat, *LS* XXXII, 13-17)

(Edmund the blessed, king of the East Angles, was wise and honorable, and always honoured the almighty God with noble customs. He was humble and virtuous, and lived so resolutely that he would not give in to shameful sins.)

Brief comments on the existence of parallels (or lack of them) for each line or half-line follow.

13a EADMUND SE EADIGA. The most common way to conjoin the phrase 'se eadiga' with a proper name (or, indeed, any noun) in Old English places the noun after 'se eadiga,' with nearly two hundred examples, including numerous examples both from Ælfric's alliterative works and from his normal prose. The reverse order is much rarer, and in fact is used only in Ælfric's alliterative compositions, in the following additional cases:

Martin (CH II XXXIV) l. 270: MARTINUS se eadiga
Memory of the Saints (LS XVI) 36a: Iob se eadiga
Oswald (LS XXVI) 13a: oþ þæt oswold se eadiga

Martin (LS XXXI) 1306a: Martinus se eadiga
Martin (LS XXXI) 1400a: martinus se eadiga
Edmund (LS XXXII) 261b: and cubberht se eadiga
Chrysanthus and Daria (LS XXXV) 234a: and hilaria se eadiga
Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem (Norman) 1: Basilius se eadiga²⁰

All of these are among Ælfric's alliterative compositions. In the given passage from the *Passion of Edmund* 13a, it might be possible to suppose that Ælfric intends 'se eadiga' to modify the following 'Eastengla cynincg,' but a comparison with Ælfric's other uses of '[name] + se eadiga' indicates that these two half-lines are best read as being in apposition, as seven of the eight other examples must be construed with 'se eadiga' as syntactically related to the preceding name. Such appositional placement, of course, is typical of the poetic mode in Old English.

13b EASTENGLA CYNINCg. This phrasing occurs with some frequency in prose (e.g., in the *Chronicle* and the *Old English Bede*). Note as well, however, that Ælfric uses it as a b-line also in *Æthelthryth* (LS XX) 5b, 'east engla cynincg.'²¹

14a wæs snotor and wurðful. There is no other equally close collocation of 'snotor' and 'wurðful' in Old English.²²

14b and wurðode symble. This is a relatively infrequent collocation, but one used two other times by Ælfric, as follows:

Sebastian (LS V) 415b: Crist ic wurðode symle
Be Hester (Assmann VIII) 140b: þe wurðodon symle.

The rarity of the collocation (which does not appear elsewhere) is somewhat surprising.²³

15a mid æpelum þeawum. Ælfric uses a similar half-line three additional times, as indicated:

Nativitas Sanctae Mariae (Assmann III) 384b: on heora æðelum þeawum
Nativitas Sanctae Mariae (Assmann III) 400b: on æpelum þeawum
Martin (LS XXXI) 49a: and for his on æðelu m þeawum

The phrase is also used in normal prose by Ælfric in the sixth homily of the First Series of the *Catholic Homilies* and it appears in Old English *Rule of Chrodegang*.²⁴

16a He wæs ead-mod. and gebungen. This is a unique collocation in Old English.²⁵

16b and swa an-ræde þurh-wunode. This collocation appears elsewhere in Old English only in Ælfric's *St Vincent* (LS XXXVII) 128a, ' & he an-ræde þurh-wunode.' Elsewhere, however, 'þurhwunian' is collocated with 'anrædlice' in the Second Series of the *Catholic Homilies* twice, in Godden's homilies *CH II* VIII, ll. 85-6 and XI, l. 66, as well as twice in Bethurum's *Wulfstan* homily V (83 and 116) and once in a gloss.²⁶

17 þæt he nolde abugan to bysmorfullum leahtrum. The alliterative collocation of 'bugan' and 'bysmorfulle' makes a full-line formula used repeatedly in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*:

Eugenia (LS II) 364: gif hi noldon bugan to ðam bysmorfullum hæðenscype

Sebastian (LS V) 157: hwæðer hi gebugan woldon . to ðam bysmorfullum godum

On Auguries (LS XVII) 48: and to deofollicum hæðenscype gebuge . bysmrigende his scyppend.

On Auguries (LS XVII) 62: Swa þæt hi nellað onbugan ðam bysmorfullum leahtrum

On Auguries (LS XVII) 230: þæt he ne mæge forbugan bysmorlice dæda

Book of Kings (LS XVIII) 43: pa ðe fram gode bugon to bysmorfullum hæðenscype

Alban (LS XIX) 48: butan he hraðe gebuge to his bysmorfullum godum

Abdon and Sennes (LS XXIV) 38: and we næfre ne onbugað . þam bysmorfullum anlicnyssum

Maccabees (LS XXV) 215: and noldon abugan to ðam bysmorfullan hæðen-scipe

Maurice (LS XXVIII) 21: swa þæt hi noldon bugan to þam bysmor-fullum hæpen-scipe

Denis (LS XXIX) 207: buton he wolde bugan to þam bysmorfullum godum

*Thomas (LS XXXVI) 245: and hu hi leahtres for-bugon . and
bysmorlice dæda*

The first of the three examples from Ælfric's *On Auguries* is in the last line printed as regular prose by Skeat; it seems possible, given the patterns seen here, that it is intended as an alliterative line, although not structured as a syntactic parallel to the other quoted lines, all of which clearly do belong to alliterative passages. Note that no other passage in Old English collocates 'bugan' and 'bysmor.'²⁷

To summarize the import of the previous paragraphs, eight of the ten Ælfrician half-lines under consideration have close parallels elsewhere in Ælfric's alliterative works: we might well identify these half-lines as meeting the formulaic criterion of 'regularly employed.' Fully 40 per cent of the passage, two of the half-lines and the full-line formula seen in *Edmund (LS XXXII) 17*, can be paralleled only in Ælfric's alliterative works and nowhere else in Old English prose or verse. Given that these repeated expressions do, in fact, generally fall into similar half-line or full-line metrical patterns, it is surely justifiable to identify these repeated phrases as 'formulas,' even if we adopt a fairly strict definition of formula. While the formulaic overlap in these examples with classical Old English verse is non-existent, it is nevertheless difficult not to see Ælfric as engaging in literate-formulaic composition, in a fashion very much like what we saw in the previous chapter in the works of the *Menologium* poet and the *Maldon* poet. In contrast to those poets, however, the body of formulas from which Ælfric draws is quite different, as it seems to be made up largely of his own alliterative works. Although Ælfric may not have had access to (or the desire to use) a store of verses from classical Old English poetry, his own works do appear to exhibit formulaic habits of composition which are themselves familiar from the verse tradition. Ælfric's repeated use of phrases and collocations that are not recorded even in his regular prose indicates not only a separate compositional method, but a separate domain of expression.

And while the formulaic overlap with classical Old English verse was non-existent in these five lines from *The Passion of Edmund*, some of Ælfric's most common formulaic verses and

lines do also appear in canonical Old English verse. Without attempting an exhaustive survey, I have identified the following examples, which might offer the potential for indicating a direct relationship.

- 1 'wide geond eorðan.' This full-verse formula occurs eight times in the ASPR (*MaxI* 199b; *Beo* 266b, 3099b; *PPs* 65.2 2b, 109.6 3b, and 137.6 1b; *DEdw* 17b; and *Men* 176b). Ælfric uses it six times in his alliterative works, and it is also used once in one of the *Blickling Homilies* and once in the prose life of Guthlac.²⁸ The late date of *The Death of Edward*, of course, makes it impossible that Ælfric might have borrowed the verse from that poem.
- 2 'x + us secgað bec.' This formula (which I distinguish from 'x + us bec secgað,' which is also well attested in Old English, including in Ælfric) appears five times in the ASPR (*GenA* 227b, 1723; *ChristB* 785b; *GuthB* 878b; and *Brun* 68b). It is used twenty-six times in Ælfric's alliterative works, and only three other times in Old English (and the two occurrences in texts relating to appropriate days to let blood are probably not independent).²⁹
- 3 'x + gewritu secgað.' This formula appears eleven times in the ASPR (*GenA* 1121b, 1630b, 2565b, 2612b; *El* 674b; *ChristB* 547b; *Phoen* 313b, 655b; *Rid* 39 1a, 13b; and *CEdg* 14b). It is used five times in Ælfric's alliterative works and in a handful of other places, not all of which are independent.³⁰
- 4 'ofslogon mid swurdes ecge.' As the listing below indicates, the collocation of some form of 'slean' with 'swurdes ecge' makes a common full-line formula in Ælfric's alliterative works:

In Media

Quadragesime

Sniof s(C)Hek(H)g10617gon

midrefs(L6MHVog157:pan

Brinksofskögsne (LgSeXVIII) 408:

Midswallow (LS style) 415:

Did Physiotherapy Help (Pope 20): 213:

Wiederholungsrate (Gefahr):

Historiography (Geyer):

Johnston (1986) (Gawford):

John Swinleyes (c. 1600-1660):

Outside of Ælfric, however, this collocation appears only once in Old English, in *Brunanburh* 4, ‘geslogon æt sæcce sweorda ecgum.’³² It is possible, of course, that Ælfric has independently linked ‘slean’ and ‘swurdes ecge,’ but the fact that such an alliterative link appears only one other time in Old English is certainly suggestive of the possibility of direct borrowing.

In fact, although the number of poetic formulas under consideration here is relatively small, and while Ælfric’s use of them probably cannot be definitively assigned to the influence of classical Old English verse, like the lexical items considered in the previous section, these usages are all comparatively infrequent outside the combined grouping ‘ASPR poems plus Ælfric’s alliterative works.’ More notably, all four of the formulaic usages discussed here also appear in the group of potentially Æthelwoldian poems discussed in [chapter 3](#). We must also recall in this context that one of the lexical items discussed above (‘herelaf’) also appeared in both *Brunanburh* and in Ælfric, with the only other attestations being in the later *Life of St Neot* and in an Aldhelm gloss (which itself very possibly derived from, or was known at, Æthelwold’s school). We should also recall the example of the rare poetic words ‘wordsnotor’ (discussed above in [chapter 3](#), page 127 and note 32), used first in the Æthelwoldian *De uirginitate* glosses, then in *The Death of Edgar*, and then in Ælfric, and ‘scyldtruma,’ which appears only in the Aldhelm glosses and Ælfric. The evidence from formulas, then, supports the possibilities discussed above that Ælfric derived his alliterative practices and some of his unusual diction from poetic models or teaching available at Æthelwold’s Winchester. Indeed, the possibility may best be regarded as a probability.

The conclusion is a striking one, and it is probably worth restating the evidence that has led me to it. Specifically, my investigation of Ælfric’s alliterative works has established, I believe, that he wrote in the literate-formulaic mode, characterized by the repeated use of unusual, even idiosyncratic

expressions and collocations to fill up his lines and half-lines. Occasionally, perhaps especially frequently in his earlier works, Ælfric made use of a number of rare words and compounds that suggest his familiarity with poetic language in general, and in at least some cases, individual words that he used seem to have clear Æthelwoldian connections, drawn either from the Aldhelm glosses that Gretsche has linked to Æthelwold or from poems that I argued in [chapter 3](#) were themselves likely to have been at Æthelwold's Winchester. To a surprising degree, Ælfric's unusual diction seems to offer some support for that earlier conclusion. At the same time, the clearest models for Ælfric's alliterative choices in regard to the alliteration of 's-' clusters and 'g' can probably be found in a synthesis of the practices of *The Metrical Psalms* and the *Chronicle/Menologium* poet, both of which were likely to have been known at Winchester.

To me, the use of alliteration patterns seemingly derived from poems that can very plausibly be placed at the very site of Ælfric's education, his use of rare and unusual poetic words that his own teacher, Æthelwold, seems to have been interested in (on the basis of the Aldhelm glosses discussed by Gretsche), and his demonstrable use of a literate-formulaic compositional method makes it very difficult to see Ælfric as writing anything other than verse. In short, if the arguments made in [chapter 3](#) for locating the composition of *The Menologium* and the first four *Chronicle* poems at Winchester are correct, we would have every reason for understanding all of Ælfric's compositional practices as things he could have learned during his school days. What Ælfric does not have, apparently, is access to the great library of classical Old English poems that I have suggested may have been at Winchester, just as we would expect for a monk or abbot of Cerne Abbas or Eynsham, although that very lack of access to classical poems may well explain why one recent scholar finds that 'his homilies lack the formulas and themes that characterize vernacular poetry' (Olsen 13). The poems that he does seem most likely to have had access to while composing his own works, on the evidence presented here, are the poems from the *Chronicle*, from which he could well have derived 'x + us secgað bec,' 'x + gewritu secgað,' and 'ofslogon mid swurdes ecge.' Of course, the evidence of Æthelweard's *Chronicle* suggests that Ælfric's secular patron also had access to a *Chronicle* manuscript (one that must

have included all four poems from *Brunanburh* to *The Death of Edgar*).³³ Significantly, the very classical poems Ælfric seems most likely to have mined as a source for poetic formulas are the very ones he is most likely to have had access to after his school days.

Even so, it seems that the metrical model for Ælfric's practice was much closer to what we find in *The Metrical Psalms* than to classical Old English metre, as my discussion of his translation of the opening of Psalm 100 indicates. But as long as we accept that that is the case, and understand that Ælfric was writing without access to a great library of older poetic models from which to draw more classical (and perhaps less current and familiar) verses and lines, we can see, as I have argued here, virtually all the features of his compositional practice fall into place, including his own remarkable mobilization of a method of literate-formulaic composition. One would certainly have to wonder why any prose stylist would use alliteration, diction, formulas, metre, and a compositional method derived from poetic models, not to mention asking why his alliterative works would so often feature metrical pointing. It seems far simpler to conclude that Ælfric learned something – a great deal, in fact – about Old English poetry while in Æthelwold's school, and that he put that knowledge to use when he became an author in his own right. Certainly, his alliterative compositions fit such a possibility with surprising precision, and it seems hard to me not to call them poems.

Conclusions: Could Ælfric Have Read *Maldon*?

At the opening of this chapter, I noted that the rare Old English word 'franca,' used twice in *The Battle of Maldon*, also appears once in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. While the case can probably not be made airtight, there are other potential indicators that Ælfric might have known *Maldon*, and it is worth at least briefly summarizing the parallels here. If, in the end, the evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate direct knowledge, at the least it gives us potential insight into lexical items and formulas that were apparently in circulation at the end of the tenth century.

Besides 'franca,' Ælfric uses at least one other very rare word that also appears in *Maldon*: 'prasse' (*Maldon* 68b). Like 'franca,' this word is also used only five times in Old English. Besides the

occurrence in *Maldon*, it is used twice in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* (*Maccabees* [LS XXV] 302b and *Denis* [LS XXIX] 208b), once in the anonymous *Seven Sleepers* homily (LS XXIII 26), and once in Napier homily XXX.³⁴ *The Seven Sleepers* homily was likely influenced by Ælfric's works, and it may well have derived the word from them (see the further discussion of *The Seven Sleepers* in chapter 5).

A small handful of lexical collocations might also be taken as evidence of a formulaic connection between Ælfric's alliterative works and *The Battle of Maldon*, as listed in Table 4.1.

Again, the number of close parallels is fairly small, but it may be worth noting that the parallels are concentrated in Ælfric's *Passion of Edmund* and *Maccabees*, where war, flight, death, and courage are clearly at issue, as they are in *Maldon*.³⁵ If there is any direct influence at work here, it would clearly seem to be *Maldon* influencing Ælfric, since *Maldon*'s classically acceptable verse forms here correspond to fuller 'late Old English' verse forms in the Ælfrician examples.

Perhaps the best we can say, on the basis of 'franca,' 'prasse,' and the verses collected in Table 4.1, is that the evidence is suggestive of the possibility of influence. At the least, the *Maldon* poet and Ælfric share a notable degree of lexical and possibly formulaic expression (involving words and collocations that are not at all widespread in the surviving Old English corpus) that we might see as typical of Old English verse around the year 1000. The fact that these parallels are so little connected to the classical tradition of Old English verse certainly stands as a reminder of the changes that were occurring in Old English poetry throughout the tenth century.

But perhaps we should be anything but surprised that the connections between Ælfric and *Maldon* are relatively slim. *The Battle of Maldon*, as my analysis in the last chapter suggested, was intensely conservative in its outlook, preserving the *comitatus* outlook by means of a careful and thorough mining of formulas and words from older books of poems. Its conservatism even seems to have manifested itself (through hypercorrection) in the poet's exceptional and non-traditional treatment of all 's-' clusters as separate alliterators. We have in the *Maldon* poet an exemplification of the very kind of audience that must have prompted the recopying of poems from the anonymous poetic

tradition in the late tenth century, although a number of his verses and lines (even some of those that ultimately derive from earlier works) show clear signs that the late Old English verse tradition was growing increasingly widespread, as had the poems of the *Menologium* poet before him.

Table 4.1

Verbal Parallels between *Maldon* and Ælfric

<i>Maldon</i>	
<i>Elfric's Beatitude</i> (LS IV) 170b: <i>bæt he his gebeot gelæste</i> ^a	
<i>Edmund</i> (LS XXXII) 78b: <i>bæt ic worhte fleames</i> ^b	
<i>Maccabees</i> (LS XXV) 586b: <i>bæt hi lagon ðær begenc</i> ^c	
<i>Edmund</i> (LS XXXII) 73b: <i>swa swa he ful cene wæs</i>	
<i>Maccabees</i> (LS XXV) 659b: <i>swa swa he eall cene wæs</i>	
<i>Wyrdwriteras</i> (Pope XXII) 13b: <i>beah ðe he cene wære</i> ^d	

- This is the only relevant collocation of these spellings (DOE online corpus proximity search ‘-beat-’ and ‘-gelæst-’); compare Ælfric’s more usual ‘behat’ (for ‘promise’ rather than ‘boast’ [‘beat’]) in *CH II V*, 172–3, ‘gif he his behat ne gelæste’ and *CH II VIII*, 119, ‘bæt he us his behat gelæste,’ both appearing in examples of his non-alliterative prose.
- These are the only close collocations of the relevant words in Old English: DOE online corpus proximity search, ‘-fleam-’ and ‘-wyr-,’ ‘-weorc-,’ and ‘-worh-.’
- These are the only relevant examples in Old English: DOE online corpus proximity search, ‘beg-’ and ‘lag-’/‘læg-.’
- These are the only relevant collocations of ‘cene’ and ‘wesan’ in Old English: DOE online corpus proximity search: ‘cene-’ and ‘w-’/‘s-.’

Ælfric, however, in following the metrical forms of *The Metrical Psalms* rather than those used by both the *Menologium* poet and Ælfric’s own contemporary the *Maldon* poet, nevertheless seems to have used methods of literate-formulaic composition that the *Maldon* poet would surely have recognized. While the compositions the two poets produced were miles apart stylistically, in their working methods – from their apparent ability to invent new poetic compounds, to their willingness to use and reuse fullverse and full-line formulas repeatedly, and

even to their very occasional use of verse rhyme – we can find many things that Ælfric and the *Maldon* poet shared. Despite the conservatism of the one and the innovativeness of the other, we can nevertheless see how very much they were contemporaries, ones who might well even have read and appreciated each others' works. The hints that Ælfric himself might have known *Maldon*, in the end, only strengthen the case made in this chapter that Ælfric's diction, his formulaicism, his alliteration, and even some of his specific formulas all work together to indicate his extensive debt to the tenth-century tradition of old English verse. the identification of Ælfric as a poet does not rely on metrical evidence alone, but on a fuller understanding of the late tenth-century context of poetic production.

It is tempting, of course, to associate Ælfric's invocation of authorship (through his use of his name in the openings and prefaces to so many of his works) as related somehow to his own poetic innovations. Yet Ælfric's self-naming seems, in the end, unrelated to his use of verse or prose, just as the anonymous presentation of *The Menologium* and the *Chronicle* can be compared to Æthelwold's anonymity in the prose translation of *The Benedictine Rule*. At the end of the tenth century, it appears, we must understand the presentation of Anglo-Saxon texts as anonymous or as authored not through the lens of their status as poetry or prose: we must deal with their authorship or anonymity at another level. Anonymity may well have been traditional in relationship to Old English verse, but at the end of the tenth century Ælfric's use of his name to authorize or contextualize both prose and verse suggests that, for him at least, that traditional connection did not constrain him.

Eleventh-century old English poets, however, generally continued to present their works anonymously (as did most eleventh-century Old English prose writers, of course). And as we shall see in the next chapter, literate-formulaic composition was also alive and well in the century after Ælfric. our failure to appreciate Ælfric's works as verse until now would surely have surprised those eleventh-century poets who often modelled their works upon his. It is to these later works that I turn next.

5 Eleventh-Century Traditions of Formulaic Composition

In a recent essay, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has examined the eleventh-century poem *The Death of Alfred*, preserved in *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annal 1036CD. Noting the extensive use of rhyme and other metrical peculiarities in *The Death of Alfred*, O'Brien O'Keeffe traces the rhetorical and aesthetic antecedents of the poem to the Ælfrician homiletic tradition, rather than to the tradition of classical verse:

What [Alfred's] suffering and death might sustain, however, is treatment within the rhetoric of the suffering of the martyrs as part of a movement to cult him. The aesthetic appeal in this commemoration is in the eleventh century more homiletic than heroic, more prose than verse, when measured by the standards of classical verse. ('Deaths and Transformations' 164)¹

O'Brien O'Keeffe's associations between 'homiletic' and 'prose' on the one hand, and 'heroic' and 'verse' on the other, invoke a familiar vision of Old English verse as deeply immersed in the heroic ethos that (I have suggested above) need not always have been shared by the Anglo-Saxons, especially those of the eleventh century. Indeed, if we see Ælfric's alliterative compositions as verse, it becomes impossible to dissociate 'verse' from 'homiletic,' as O'Brien O'Keeffe's reference to 'the standards of classical verse' may implicitly acknowledge. And while she does not explore the formulaic parallels of the verses and lines of *The Death of Alfred* (as she does in the same essay for *The Death of Edward*, the last of the *Chronicle* poems included in the ASPR; see below), the exercise would only have strengthened O'Brien O'Keeffe's claims for Ælfrician influence upon this poem. [Table 5.1](#) indicates some important parallels between *The Death of Alfred* and Ælfrician (and related) homiletic and hagiographic texts.

Table 5.1
Key Ælfrician Parallels to *The Death of Alfred*

DAlf 9b & Basilissa (LS XVII) 127b: and sume eac ablende
Auguries (LS XVII) 129a: Sume men synd swa ablende^a
DMf 10a & sume (LS XVII) 127b: arðan be he behamelod wurde^b
DMf 10a & sume (LS XVII) 126a: and hine behættedon
Maccabees (LS XXV) 116a: and hine behættian^c
Augures (LS XVII) 126a: hine behættian ecnysse bliðe mid
criste^d
DAlf 18 & Eligbyrig (LS VII) 186a: ylcen byrig þe se
gebundene eode
7 Sleepers (LS XXIII) 609-10: onmiddan þære byrig swa
gebundenne^e

-
- a. These are the only relevant collocations of ‘sume’ and ‘blende’ (DOE online corpus proximity search, ‘sum-’ and ‘blende-’/‘ablende-’).
 - b. ‘Hamelian’ appears only in these two places and in the *Old English Martyrology* (DOE online corpus search ‘-hamel-’).
 - c. ‘Hættian’ appears in these three places, in the laws of Cnut, and in glosses to Aldhelm’s *De uirginitate* (DOE online corpus search ‘-hætti-,’ ‘-hætted-,’ and ‘-hættod-’).
 - d. These are the only relevant collocations of the words in question (DOE online corpus proximity search, ‘-bl-,’ ‘-bl-,’ and ‘-crist-’).
 - e. These are the only relevant collocations of ‘-byr-’ and ‘-gebund-’ in Old English (DOE online corpus proximity search). Note that ‘Eligbyrig’ is an infrequent designation for Ely, and that ‘swa gebundenne’ suggests a closer relationship to *The Seven Sleepers* than to *Julian and Basilissa*. Although it is not quite as restricted a collocation, note that ‘ful gehende’ (used in *DAlf* 24b) appears ten times in Old English, once in *The Death of Alfred*, once in Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints (Cecilia (LS XXXIV) 51b)*, seven times in *The Seven Sleepers*, and once in a charter (DOE online proximity search ‘ful-’ and ‘gehend-’).

Each of the parallels noted here, whether involving lexical items, whole verses, or full-line structures, is notably rare in the surviving Old English corpus. there are no other similar collocations of ‘sume’ and ‘blende,’ while ‘hamelian’ appears only in these passages and in the *Old English Martyrology*. ‘hættian’ is almost as rare, being found only in the three spots noted in [Table](#)

5.1, in the laws of Cnut, and in the glosses to Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, which (as noted earlier), may well have been a part of Ælfric's school reading. The very close conjunction of the extremely rare words 'behamelod' and 'behættedon' in *Maccabees* (LS XXV) 126-7 may even suggest that *Maccabees* is here the direct source for *The Death of Alfred*. The alliterative structurings of the lines linking 'blissian' and 'bliðe mid Crist' and the pairing of 'byrig' and 'gebunden' are likewise otherwise unrecorded in Old English.

These very rare words and collocations strongly suggest that, as with Ælfric's own compositions (discussed above in [chapter 4](#)), the *Death of Alfred* poet composed his or her poem in the highly traditional, literate-formulaic fashion, using Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* as a primary (if not sole) source for what he or she perceived as poetic words, verses, and lines. That the possible sources of these verses are limited to Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* (perhaps a manuscript including *The Seven Sleepers*) strongly confirms O'Brien O'Keeffe's interpretation of the work as employing the hagio-graphic mode: when composing this poem, *The Death of Alfred* poet apparently turned first to hagiographical sources and models. Just as strikingly, the parallels between *The Death of Alfred* and *Lives of Saints* are concentrated in only three or four of the *Lives*: *The Death of Alfred* poet must have known those works best, or mined them most thoroughly, with less attention apparently given to other works, even within Ælfric's *Lives*. The parallels again seem to fall into a pattern for which random accident would seem an unattractive hypothesis: influence seems more likely. But significantly, where modern readers have hesitated to see Ælfric's alliterative works as verse, this eleventh-century poet certainly mined those works for verses and lines exactly as if they were indeed understood as verse. And, as we shall see, he or she was not the only eleventh-century poet to have done so.

O'Brien O'Keeffe's essay, it should be noted, takes its place in a long tradition of essays that point to a crucial overlap between 'poetic' and 'homiletic' discourses that includes work by Mary Richards ('Prosaic Poetry'), D.R. Letson ('Poetic Content'), and Samantha Zacher ('Rewards of Poetry'), as well as scholars concerned with Ælfric's vocabulary and expressions (as discussed in [chapter 4](#)) and a variety of other scholars discussed below. Indeed, it should probably be recognized that there is no reason

to suppose that there was any real distinction between homiletic or hagiographic and poetic discourses in later Old English literature: both prose and poetry were capable of expressing homiletic and hagiographic themes, and part of my argument in this and the preceding chapter is that we must look to something other than these kinds of thematic designations to clarify the generic status of texts like Ælfric's alliterative compositions – and of other works as well. To say that poetic and homiletic discourses overlap says too little to be of interest, in the end, unless we take it as a reminder that 'poetic' need not always be associated with 'heroic' in our vision of the period. The range of eleventh-century poetry, as I will suggest in this chapter, extended beyond both the heroic and the homiletic, even while it often looked back to the very poetic expressions used and apparently popularized by both Ælfric and Wulfstan the Homilist.

In this chapter, then, I attempt to survey a variety of previously unrecognized evidence for the cultural prominence and function of late Old English poetry during the eleventh century. Building on the evidence presented in the introduction above that Wulfstan the Homilist knew and quoted from *Andreas*, I will show that some of Wulfstan's own phrases were borrowed by at least one later poet, just as his homilies were often recycled by later compilers. The overlap between 'homiletic' and 'poetic' discourses was apparently so well understood that this later poet could identify the most 'poetic' passages from Wulfstan's homilies and use them as a source for poetic verses and lines. I will also show that the compiler of Napier homily XXIX drew not only on *Judgment Day II*, but also on another, previously unrecognized Old English poem in the late Old English verse tradition. A consideration of *The Seven Sleepers*, a non-Ælfrician hagiographic work that at least sometimes travelled with Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, will suggest that it, too, has passages that clearly belong in the late verse tradition.² Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of two post-Conquest poems from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, suggesting that they, like *The Death of Alfred*, also use formulas borrowed directly from Ælfric, indicating the surprising longevity of the literate-formulaic tradition of writing Old English verse, as well as offering a final indication of Ælfric's place within that tradition. Throughout, as my examples will show, the modern failure to correctly identify passages of late Old English

poetry has led to critical misunderstandings of the reality of poetic composition and transmission in the eleventh century.

The Bodley 180 Prayer

In the introduction, I suggested that Wulfstan the Homilist must have known the classical Old English poem *Andreas*, primarily on the evidence of Wulfstan's characteristic and repeated collocation of the phrases 'an ece Godd, waldend 7 wyrhta ealra gesceafta' (one eternal god, ruler and builder of all creation; Bethurum VII, 32-3). The one remaining passage in Old English that I did not discuss in the introduction that makes use of parts of Wulfstan's phrasing lies at the end of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 180, an early twelfth-century manuscript that primarily consists of Alfred's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.³ This brief prayer opens in the following fashion: 'Drihten ælmihtiga God, wyrhta 7 wealdend ealra gesceafta,' (Lord Almighty God, creator and ruler of all creation; Sedgfield 149), which is so strikingly similar to Wulfstan's phrasing as to suggest the possibility of a direct relationship. Just as the rarity and unusual nature of Wulfstan's phrase itself indicated that its source must have been *Andreas*, the Bodley 180 prayer's line must be a recycling of Wulfstan, where the juxtaposition of 'wealdend 7 wyrhta' with 'ealra gesceafta' is, for all practical purposes, otherwise entirely restricted.⁴ Janet Bately's recent discussion of the Bodley 180 prayer is concerned only to demonstrate that Alfred was not its author; her comment on 'wyrhta 7 wal-dend' indicates merely that the collocation 'is found in a number of late OE texts' ('Alfredian Canon' 119, note 73). The probability that the Bodley prayer derives these words from Wulfstan, however, suggests a date for the prayer no earlier than the early eleventh century; a later date, I think, seems even likelier, although perhaps not as late as the manuscript itself.

Even if the date remains uncertain, however, it is important to recognize that (at least in part) the Bodley 180 prayer was written in the literate-formulaic mode as a piece of late Old English verse. The beginning of the prayer can be lineated as follows:

Drihten ælmihtiga god,

wyrhta 7 wealdend ealra gesceafta
 ic bidde þe for þinre micelan mildheortnessan.
 7 for þære halegan rode tacne.
 7 for Sancta Marian mægðhade,⁵
 7 for Sancte Michaelles gehyrsumnesse.
 7 for ealra þinra halgana lufan 7 heora earnungum
 þæt þu me gewissige bet þonne ic awyrhte to þe.

(cited from appendix, below)

(Lord Almighty God, creator and ruler of all creation, I pray you on account of your great mercy, and the holy sign of the cross, and the virginity of Saint Mary, and the obedience of Saint Michael, and the love and deserving of all your saints, that you guide me better than I have done by you.)⁶

Even given the unusual three-syllable verse in the fifth of these lines, this quoted passage would seem to fall well within the range of late Old English verse, and its dense use of alliteration on ‘w,’ ‘m,’ and ‘h’ in this passage stands out quite clearly here; a lineation of the entire Bodley 180 prayer can be found in the appendix. Although the second line, as noted above, appears to derive directly from Wulfstan, the Bodley 180 prayer’s opening, ‘Drihten ælmihtig god’ is clearly non-Wulfstanian, as Wulfstan seems never to collocate the rhyme-words ‘drihten’ and ‘ælmihtig,’ although Ælfric and other authors do so frequently.⁷ We might be encouraged in finding a poetic effect in the Bodley 180 prayer by noting that the third line, ‘ic bidde þe for þinre micelan mildheortnessan’ might conceivably be derived from Wulfstan, or more directly from a poetic source, as [Table 5.2](#) hints.

None of the examples in [Table 5.2](#) can be seen as a certain source for the Bodley 180 prayer, however, as there are also a variety of prose examples, besides the Wulfstanian one: ‘miclan mildheortnesse’ might be understood in general as a familiar phrase from the Psalms (occurring often in psalter glosses), alliteratively recalling its Latin source, ‘magnam misericordiam.’ Nevertheless, the close conjunction of this line with ‘wyrhta 7 wealdend ealra gesceafta’ increases the likelihood of a poetic intention in the prayer as a whole, not only because of the

frequency with which this line appears in *The Metrical Psalms*, but because an additional parallel within the Bodley 180 prayer can be traced with more precision, and it probably indicates the source for the ‘þinre micelan mildheortnessan’ passage. The relevant portion of the Bodley 180 prayer is the sixth of the lines printed above, ‘7 for ealra þinra halgana lufan 7 heora earnungum’ which appears to derive directly from a line in another unrecognized poetic prayer (to be discussed in the next section), which begins, after its own extra-metrical address, as follows:

Table 5.2

Poetic or Wulfstanian Parallels for ‘þinre micelan mildheortnesse’

Bodley 180 Prayer 3: ic bidde be for þinre
micelan mildheortnessan
PPs 108.25 4: for þinre bære myclan mildheortnysse
PPs 113.10 1: Forðinre bære myclan mildheortnysse
PPs 118.88 1: Æfter ðinre bære myclan mildheortnesse
PPs 118.149 2: æfter ðinre bære myclan mildheortnesse
PPs 137.3 1: Ofer bine ba miclan mildheortnesse
FrPs 24.6 4: for ðinre bære myclan mildheortnysse
FrPs 50.1 2: æfter ðinre bære mycelan mildheortnysse
KtPs 34: efter þinre ðære miclan mildhiortnesse
Wulfstan (Bethurum XVIII 30-1): bæt he burh his
miclan mildheortnesse

for þinre þære micelan mildheortnysse.

7 for ealra þinra haligra lufan 7 geeearnuncga. (Min
Drihten Leof 2-3)

(on account of your great mercy and for all your holy love
and merit.)

The collocation of ‘haligra’ (or ‘halgana’), ‘lufan,’ and ‘geearnunga’ is conspicuously unusual in Old English (as discussed further in the next section), and it therefore seems virtually certain that these lines of the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer must be the source for both the related lines in Bodley prayer. As noted in the appendix, a handful of other close and unusual parallels between the two works likewise suggest a close

relationship of dependence.

There is, as the appendix suggests, at least one additional probable source for the Bodley 180 prayer. According to my lineation, line 12b reads, ‘þa fulan galnysse,’ and only one other author in Old English uses the adjective ‘ful with the noun ‘galnys’: Ælfric. In fact, Ælfric uses this pairing ten times, nine of which appear in his alliterative works.⁸ The infrequency of the collocation suggests an ultimately Ælfrician source for this particular verse in the Bodley prayer, whether pulled directly from a manuscript or from memory. The use or reuse of verses or lines from Wulfstan, from Ælfric, and from the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer, however, gives additional evidence for the continued use of a method of composition in which verses and lines were recycled by poets from pre-existing books well into the eleventh century. It is notable, after all, that (as in the examples from *The Death of Alfred* discussed above), the parallels do seem to be remarkably close to the size and shape of verses and lines: the fact that these parallels are not of various sizes (as would be appropriate for prose borrowings) is additional circumstantial evidence for the possibility that the verse or verse-like structure of these passages was well recognized. The nature of these parallels, in their size and shape and in the variety of their potential sources, even within a short passage like the opening of the Bodley 180 prayer, would be puzzling, I think, in a prose context, but it is perfectly familiar from the literate-formulaic composition of poems I have described above in earlier poems.

At the earliest, the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer and the Bodley 180 prayer may be dated to the first half of the eleventh century (see appendix); the Bodley 180 prayer may or may not have been written in order to be associated with the prose Boethius.⁹ In any case, we should probably note that the placement and content of the Bodley 180 prayer gives it some of the effect of a colophon, an effect actually strengthened by its verse form and first-person format, since other colophonic poems generally also feature a first-person presentation. Thus, we might usefully read the Bodley 180 prayer in the context of Alfred’s *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*, as well as the *The Metrical Epilogue to MS 41, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*, which (as Fred C. Robinson has suggested) reads as a colophonic poem in the voice of Bede, since it follows the Old English translation of Bede’s

Historiaecclesiastica.¹⁰ Whether we read the Bodley 180 prayer as in the voice of Alfred or of a scribe, however, is probably less important than understanding its place within an eleventh- (or early twelfth-) century context, in which the literate-formulaic tradition of poetic composition operated, making use of a database of verses and lines radically different from those used by the tenth-century poets discussed in [chapter 3](#), but otherwise apparently functioning in much the same fashion.

Napier XXIX and *Min Drihten Leof*

The fact that the Bodley 180 prayer apparently recycled a line from Wulfstan as part of the process of literate-formulaic composition surely suggests that Wulfstan's use of poetic effects was well enough understood that later poets might even use his homilies as a source for poetic expressions. But rather than indicating that homiletic influence necessarily results in 'prosaic poetry' (as Mary Richards has suggested), this kind of example attests, rather, to the contemporary audience's ability to hear Wulfstan's poeticisms within his homilies: an ability, indeed, to recognize and identify a poetic register which fails to correspond to the classical poetics of Sieversian verse in any close fashion. As such, the testimony of such audiences is of great value for our own attempts to understand such non-Sieversian poetry. Our conventional association of homilies with the genre of prose, however, clearly undervalues the degree to which Anglo-Saxon audiences must have been accustomed to hearing verse even within homilies, at least in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Even a brief survey of the secondary literature on the question suggests the extent of the interchange between prose homilies and late Old English poems in particular. Already in the Vercelli Book (dated by Ker, *Catalogue* 460 as 's. x²'), two homilies are widely acknowledged as taking some material directly from Old English poems: Vercelli XXI uses parts of *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, while Vercelli II includes portions of a poem edited by Stanley (from the copy in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201) as *The Judgment of the Damned*. Separate additional passages from Vercelli XXI are associated with poetry by Angus McIntosh and Charles D. Wright.¹¹ As the Vercelli Book is commonly understood as being written a generation before Ælfric

and Wulfstan began composing their own works, their own styles must be understood as operating within a context where ‘poetry’ and ‘homily’ were clearly not kept rigorously separate.¹² Another familiar example probably dating from the eleventh century is the case of Napier homily XXIX, which is known to recycle portions of *Judgment Day II*.¹³ Probably less familiar to most readers is the case of the homily on the phoenix now preserved (in somewhat different forms) in London, British Library Cotton Vespasian D. xiv and in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198, which makes extensive use of a poetic source (some fifty lines are printed as verse in the edition of Cook).¹⁴ The (probably) twelfth-century work on *The Soul’s Address to the Body* from the Worcester Fragments is edited as verse by Moffat but treated in bibliographies and the *Dictionary of Old English* as a prose homily (Homily U5).

Even if modern readers cannot always agree on whether a given text is prose or verse, the survival of so many examples makes it abundantly clear that homilists working primarily in prose felt very comfortable borrowing even extensive passages from pre-existing poems, sometimes recasting them so far as to obscure their verse origins, but often leaving their verse structure fairly evident. The work of later authors of composite homilies in incorporating material from Ælfric’s alliterative works might be best understood as a continuation of just such a habit of composition: there is no reason to see the reuse of Ælfric as evidence that his works were prose. In such a context, Wulfstan’s use of material from *Andreas* is clearly well within the range of contemporary practices, and the ability of the Bodley 180 poet to identify part of Wulfstan’s homiletic works as poetic is really hardly remarkable at all. But this circumstance makes it important for modern readers to be equally sensitive to the possible presence of poetic effects or poetic passages within homilies, and the fact that *The Judgment of the Damned* and the phoenix poem no longer survive separately might urge us to suspect that other passages now preserved only in homilies might ultimately derive from lost poems, even homiletic passages that do not now look especially verse-like. Just such a passage, I believe, can be found in Napier XXIX:

and uton biddan urne drihten for his myclan mildheortnesse and

for ealra his halgena lufon and geearnunga, þast he gemiltsige us synnfullum and ure mod to his willan gestrangje and ðs on þisre worulde to his willan gehealde and æfter þissere worulde reste forgyfe and us næfre of ðisere worulde ne forlæte, ær we þurh his mildheortnesse forgyfennesse habban ealles þæs, þe we æfre ongean his mæran willan geworhton on wôrde oððe on weorce oððe on geðance. heofonan heahcýning and ealles middaneardes alysend, gemiltsa us synnfullum, swa swa ðîn milda wylla sý.
(Napier XXIX 142)

(And let us pray our Lord for his great mercy and for the merit and love of all his saints, that he show mercy to us sinful ones and strengthen our mind to his wishes and hold us in this world to his wishes, and give us rest after this world, and never let us leave this world before we have his forgiveness through his mercy for all that we ever wrought against his illustrious will, in word, or in works, or in thought. High-king of the heavens and deliverer of all earth, have mercy on us sinful ones, just as your merciful wishes might be.)

Readers of this chapter, of course, will recognize ‘for his myclan mildheortnesse and for ealra his halgena lufon and geearnunga’ as being related to passages from the Bodley 180 prayer discussed in the previous section, but Whitbread’s only comment on this section simply notes that in this prayer God is ‘addressed somewhat poetically as *heofonan heahcýning and ealles middangeardes alysend*’ (351-2). As I suggested above, however, the actual source for this passage happens to be preserved as a separate item in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. iii; and London, British Library, Royal 2. B. v: the *Min Drihten Leof* poem briefly mentioned in the preceding section, the beginning of which reads:

Min drihten leof
for þinre þære micelan mildheortnysses.
7 for ealra þinra haligra lufan 7 geearnunga.
gemiltsa me synnfullum. swa swa þin mæra willa si.
7 min mod to þinum willan gestranga. 7 gestaðola.
7 min drihten ne læt me næfre færlicum deaðe
of þissum earman life gewitan. ac loce hwenne
min tima beo 7 þin willa si.

þæt ic þis læne lif forlætan sceol.

læt me mid gedefnysse mine dagas geendian.

Eac ic bidde þe min drihten leof

for þlines sylfes godnysse. þæt þu me of þissere worulde ne læte.

ær ic þurh þine micelan mildheortnysse

forgyfenysse hæbbe. ealles þæs þe ic æfre ongean

þinne mæran willan geworhte. dæges oððe nihtes.

gewealdes oððe ungewealdes. on worde. oððe on weorce.

oððe on minum þystrum gepance. Heofona heahcýning.

ealles middaneardes onlýsend. gemiltsa me earminge.

swa swa þu wille. 7 þurh þæt þæt ðu wille.

(cited from the appendix; Royal 2 B. v version)¹⁵

(My dear Lord, on account of your great mercy and all your holy love and merit, show mercy to sinful me, as your illustrious will might be, and strengthen and stabilize my mind to your wishes. And, my Lord, never let me pass from this wretched life through sudden death, but look when my time shall be, and your will might be that I shall give up this transitory life. Let me end my days with quietude. Also I bid you, my dear Lord, for the goodness of your own self, that you not let me pass out of this world before I have, through your great mercy, forgiveness of all that I ever wrought against your illustrious wishes, day or night, by my control or my lack of control, in word or in deed, or in my dark thoughts. High-king of the heavens, deliverer of all the earth, show mercy to me, a wretch, just as you wish, and through that which you wish; underlined elements are those which also appear in Napier XXIX.)¹⁶

The similarity of language in the two passages makes it certain that there is a close dependence; given the use of the poetic *Judgment Day II* elsewhere in Napier XXIX, it seems most likely that the homily's version is derived from the prayer.

Like the prayer at the end of Bodley 180, the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer is also best understood as an example of late Old English verse; certainly it does not use classical Old English metrical forms, at least in this passage. The parallels to lines 2-3 of *Min*

Drihten Leof were addressed above.¹⁷ But we should also note that ‘heofona heahcýning’ is in fact a common poetic formula, and that ‘heahcýning’ itself should probably be understood as a poetic compound. With various spellings, ‘heahcýning’ appears twenty-one times in the ASPR (collocating with an inflected form of ‘heofon’ as a full-verse formula in *GenA* 1025a, 2166a; *Dan* 407a, 625a; *And* 6a; *ChristA* 150a; *ChristC* 1339a; *Phoen* 446a; *LPrlll* 15a; *Creed* 51a; *Seasons* 4a, 10a, 53a; and *KtHy* 42a). A search of the DOE online corpus identifies Napier XXIX as the only ‘prose’ exemplification of the phrase, since the DoE corpus’s version of *Min Drihten Leof* (from the *Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*) prints ‘heah cýning.’ The phrase ‘heofena heah cýning’ also appears in the ‘bidding prayer’ printed by Stevenson from the York Gospels (‘Yorkshire Surveys’), which (as discussed in the appendix) seems to have other affinities of diction with both the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer and the Bodley 180 prayer, suggesting that all appearances of ‘heahcýning’ in Old English are in poetry or in prose texts derived from poems. As this batch of data indicates, ‘heofona heahcýning’ is an especially clear example of a classical old English poetic formula that made the transition into late Old English verse, with few if any attestations in true prose contexts – except in cases where the prose texts have been directly influenced by poems.

It is equally important to recognize that the alliterative collocation seen in ‘oððe on minum pystrum gepance,’ also appears to be identifiably poetic, being found elsewhere in Old English only in *Elene* 312a, ‘peostrum gepancum,’ and *Beowulf* 2332a, ‘peostrum geponcum.’¹⁸ The alliterating doublets seen in ‘gestranga 7 gestaðola,’ ‘gewealdes oððe ungewealdes’ and ‘on worde oððe on weorce’ presumably also contribute to the poetic effect, even where they also have some representation in prose works. The Napier XXIX author’s elimination of four of the eight words involved in the alliterative pairings considered in this paragraph may suggest just how concerned he was to prosify the (apparently perceptible) poetic effect of the original passage. The use of poetic formulas and poetic diction, then, surely indicates the poetic intention of the original *Min Drihten Leof* passage, despite its manifest departures from the Sieversian standards of classical verse. Even if the remainder of *Min Drihten Leof* is best seen as prose (which I am not sure is the case), the prayer as a

whole clearly still seems to make use of a poetic component, just as so many homilies do. Certainly, the use of *Min Drihten Leof* by the Bodley 180 poet would support the conclusion that all or part of this prayer was seen as poetic in the eleventh century; the reuse of part of *Min Drihten Leof* by the author of Napier XXIX is equally suggestive, since Napier XXIX also includes material from another poem. If prayers are considered to be liturgical works, we must conclude that the use of poetic effects, extending even to passages of what must surely be identified as poetry, was not merely a feature of the homiletic genre but extended to liturgical texts as well.

Identifying even a portion of the *Min Drihten Leof* passage as a poem is, of course, significant in its own right, as it reminds us of how sketchy and incomplete our knowledge of the late Old English verse tradition remains. But recognizing *Min Drihten Leof* as a source for Napier XXIX is also important, because it extends our understanding of how verse and prose interacted in the composition of Old English homilies. To take only one example, Winfried Rudolf's recent comment, 'It is hardly surprising that among the verse or verse-like passages identified in Old English homilies the topic of Judgement Day plays a dominant role, since religious motif and poetic style create an effective rhetorical combination' (2) serves well to introduce his own consideration of *Judgment Day II* and *The Judgment of the Damned*, but the recognition that the compiler of Napier XXIX used not only *Judgment Day II* but *Min Drihten Leof* suggests that his or her use of poetry was not limited to 'the topic of Judgement Day.' The Napier XXIX homilist turned to verse more than once – and to poems very different in both content and form – in the compilation of this homily, indicating the breadth of his or her reading of verse as well as exemplifying the interpenetration of the two genres in the eleventh century. The Napier XXIX homilist, it may turn out, is one of the most interesting audiences for Old English verse so far identified.

Verse Structures in *The Seven Sleepers*

Included in Skeat's edition of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* are four anonymous (that is, non-Ælfrician) works, including the lengthy *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*.¹⁹ Skeat, while apparently accepting

The Seven Sleepers as Ælfrician, nevertheless printed the homily according to a prose-like layout, in long lines across the page, presumably because he felt that *The Seven Sleepers* did not have the regularity of line structure that is generally characteristic of Ælfric's style. One of the most striking features of *The Seven Sleepers*, however, is its extensive use of rhyme (see Table 5.3); indeed, rhyme is so persistently employed in *The Seven Sleepers* in what seem to be long-line structures as to make it necessary to ask whether passages of verse appear in the homily or whether a lost poem might lay behind it.

Each line so presented, of course, would fit within the metrical system operative for late Old English verse, and nine of the fifteen lines (if we can call them 'lines') in Table 5.3 show alliterative links in addition to the rhyme (73-4; 84-5; 86-7; 148-9; 223-4; 229-30 (BB-alliteration); 252-3; 270-1; 300), while two others exhibit alliteration if we see 'hæpengylde' as alliterating with 'earmlice' (31) and scan 'menniscnysse' as SxSx (166-7).²⁰ Notably, these rhymes exhibit a close matching of inflectional syllables as well as of root syllables, a practice generally not followed in late Old English verse but interestingly paralleled in *The Death of Alfred* (see my *Early English Metre* 92), which (as we have seen above) shows other links to *The Seven Sleepers*. Further potential evidence that these are metrical lines lies in the fact that thirteen of these fifteen rhymes show pointing after the final word. We should also note that these clearest examples of rhyme (and there are a number of probable examples of off-rhyme as well) are clearly clustered in the first third of *The Seven Sleepers*, which extends in Skeat's edition to 840 lines; if nothing else, the distribution of such rhymes in *The Seven Sleepers* suggests a possible shift in sources or approach on the part of the author.

Table 5.3
Rhyme in *The Seven Sleepers*

31:	mid þam hæpengylde	earmlice gefylde.
73–74:	swilce oðer wæterflod	swa fleow heora blod.
84–85:	wundor-lic wæs þæt martyr-cynn	and wið deofol strang gewinn.
86–87:	Swilc mihte campdom beon.	swilce man ðær mihte

geseon.

148–49: þe sylfne hi for-fleoð. and þine hæse forseoð.

166–67: þe for ure neode on menniscnysse eode

201: and heom betweenan rædon and þus ge-þwærlice cwædon.

223–24: and his geferan mete bohte. and to heom þone gebrohte.

229–30: þa þa he mid ungemete heom behet ælcne hete.

231–32: and gehwa sohte gener þær-rihte ðær he ænig findan mihte.

237–38: and on geomrunge ðære mæstan heora lif eall befæston;

252–53: þe his gecorenan bið swa milde swa modor bið hire agenum cilde.

267: ðær man gengde geond eall abutan þone portweall

270–71: Mycel is me unbliss minra dyrlinga miss.

300: and ðone casere bædon and ofdrædde him to-cwædon;^a

a. Line numbers in Table 5.4 are given according to Skeat's *Lives of Saints* edition.

The possibility that the examples of rhyme listed in Table 5.3 should be attributed to a poetic source or a poetic intention on the part of the author can, in fact, be supported further. Certain lexical items in *The Seven Sleepers*, for example, seem clearly to belong to the realm of verse, including ‘prasse’ (l. 26; see discussion of this word in chapter 4), ‘wæterflod’ (l. 74; 3 verse occurrences, one occurrence in Orosius), ‘earfoð-fynde’ (l. 82; unique, but ‘eaðfynde’ is restricted to verse), and ‘(ge)fyrndagum’ (ll. 588, 614). At least two compounds appear only in *The Seven Sleepers* and in Ælfric’s works (‘nebwlite’ and ‘weorcstan’).²¹ Further, a handful of collocations look suspiciously like poetic formulas: ‘wide and side’ (l. 145; almost entirely restricted to poems, Ælfric’s alliterating works, Wulfstan’s homilies, and the Æthelwoldian Aldhelm glosses); ‘ofer eorðan adylgian’ (l. 11; a collocation paralleled only in the 979DE *Chronicle* poem); and ‘onmiddan pære byrig swa gebundenne’ (ll. 609–10; discussed above as a parallel to – and potential source for – the 1036CD *Chronicle* poem). The lexical and formulaic material discussed here, it should be noted, is also clustered in, but not restricted to, the first third of *The Seven Sleepers*.

Finally, it is quite easy to lineate a number of passages from

The Seven Sleepers as fitting within the tradition of late Old English verse, though I will take only one passage as an example:

Ælc man þa æfter ðam ge-bode ofer eall ferdon.
mann smeade uppan lande. man axode on porte.
ðær man gengde geond eall abutan þone portweall
man strutnode²² on ælcere stowe
þær man hi æfre geaxian cuðe.
ne mihte hi nan man na hwer findan.
He þa se casere dreorigan mode.
cwæð to his þegnum mid ðyllicum wordum.
Mycel is me unbliss minra dyrlinga miss.

(adapted from Skeat, *LS* XXIII, 265-71)

As with the rhyming lines collected in [Table 5.3](#), the lineation here is largely supported by the pointing, with seven of nine b-lines pointed, and either rhyme or alliteration (or both) links half-lines together in all but one case.²³ The manuscript reading ‘strutnode’ is especially interesting, as it presumably involves a scribal misreading of ‘c’ as ‘t,’ which is neither uncommon nor palaeographically unusual, but here it results quite strikingly in ‘st-’ cluster alliteration. The rarity of ‘scrutnian’ (an ‘Æthelwoldian’ word, discussed in Gretschi, *Intellectual Foundations*, 211-18) may have prompted the misreading, as the scribe, coming across an unfamiliar word, may have assumed an alliterative intention.

It is, I believe, impossible to read all the passages of *The Seven Sleepers* as equally poetic, but in its use of rhyme in ‘long-line’ structures and in the preservation of seemingly poetic passages such as this one, it seems likely that the author either used poetic structures for effect within a largely prose work, or else borrowed heavily from a more comprehensively poetic treatment of the ‘Seven Sleepers’ legend. Either way, *The Seven Sleepers* should be added to the list of homiletic and hagiographic texts that include a poetic component.²⁴ More work, I believe, is needed to sort out the complex status and use of prose and verse within this text.

The case of *The Seven Sleepers* is also instructive for its reminder that our perceptions of authorship may not have been operative for Anglo-Saxon readers: even W.W. Skeat took Ælfric

as the author, on the basis (no doubt) of the *Lives of Saints* prefaces at the beginning of his base manuscript, Cotton Julius E. vii. our ability to use stylistic criteria to disprove Ælfric's authorship may not have been available to even the most perceptive Anglo-Saxon reader, especially given the habit of many scribes to alter and update the texts that they copied (even, as has often been noted, when Ælfric explicitly asked them not to). Such scribal updating, of course, always has the potential to obscure authorial features of style. Later readers, such as the poet of *The Death of Alfred*, would presumably have made no distinction between the *Lives of Saints* texts that we consider to be Ælfrician and those that we do not; if my suggestion above is correct that the *Death of Alfred* poet consulted a manuscript of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* as part of a literate-formulaic composing process, that manuscript presumably included *The Seven Sleepers*, and the *Death of Alfred* poet apparently found material within *The Seven Sleepers* just as poetic – and, presumably, just as Ælfrician – as the material borrowed from what we know as the Ælfrician *Lives*.

Malcolm and Margaret and William the Conqueror

In a forthcoming essay, I have reexamined *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* annal 1067D and its associated poem, suggesting that an understanding of late Old English verse structures allows us to see the poetic portion of the annal as a self-contained poem of thirty-five lines (which I titled *Malcolm and Margaret*), rather than the five-line rhyming fragment lineated as verse by Plummer. Parallels presented in that essay indicate that, like the author of *The Death of Alfred*, the poet of *Malcolm and Margaret* knew Ælfric's alliterative works and used them in his own composition. The parallels run to about six lines (a substantial proportion) of *Malcolm and Margaret* (*M&M*); the closest parallels make the case for influence virtually certain, and they involve the following passage from that poem:

Be þam se apostol Paulus, ealra þeoda lareow, cwæð:
 'Saluabitur uir infidelis per mulierem fidelem.
 Sic et mulier infidelis per uirum fidelem.' (et *reliquiae*.)
 þæt is on uran gepeode: 'Ful oft se ungeleaffulla wer

bið gehalgad *ond* gehæled purh þæt rihtwise wif,
ond swa gelice þæt wif purh geleaffulne wer.’

(27-32; cited from my forthcoming essay)²⁵

(Regarding this, the apostle Paul, teacher of all nations, says: ‘*Salvabitur vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem. Sic et mulier infidelis per virum fidelis, et reliquiae.*’ That is, in our tongue, ‘Very often the unbelieving man is made holy and healed through the righteous woman and likewise the woman is through a faithful man’.)

The sources for the Old English portions of this passage appear to be in three short passages from Ælfric’s *De Doctrina Apostolica* (Pope XIX): ‘Se apostol Pauus, ealra peoda lareow’ (70-1) and ‘þæt ungeleaffulle wif byð gerihtwisod purh pone geleaffullan wer’ (96) and ‘se ungeleaffulla wer byð gerihtwisod purh þæt [ge]leaffulle wíf’ (98-9). Clearly, there has been some rearrangement here, and in fact Pope prints all these passages with the prose-like lineation. But (as I also note in my essay) the interlineation of ‘leaffulle’ over ‘rihtwise’ in what I print as verse 31b makes it virtually certain that at least one very early reader (whom Cubbin identifies as the original scribe: 83) could see the connection between these passages, even while no mark of expunction is present. Despite Pope’s lineation, the Ælfrician passages in question may well be verse passages; in any case, the *Malcolm and Margaret* poet clearly must have had this particular Ælfrician text in mind when composing this passage, freely borrowing from it in the construction of his own verses and lines.

Somewhat surprisingly, like *Malcolm and Margaret*, *William the Conqueror* (the *Chronicle* poem preserved in annal 1086E, excluded from the ASPR but included in Robinson and Stanley), also evidences a knowledge of Ælfric’s alliterative works. *William the Conqueror* 15a, ‘gif hi woldon libban,’ for example, is closely paralleled only by *St Maur* (LS VI) 211b, ‘gif he wolde libban,’ although the phrase is probably not sufficiently unusual to prove a relationship in itself.²⁶ More telling is the fact that *William the Conqueror* uses the very rare Old English word ‘headeor’ in line 10a; apart from the compounds ‘headerhundas’ and ‘headeorhunton’ in two wills (Sawyer 1597 and 1503), ‘headeor’ appears elsewhere in Old English only in Ælfric’s *Hexameron*

(Norman 16).²⁷ Perhaps most remarkably, the final line of *William the Conqueror*, ‘7 do him \his/ synna forgifenesse’ (20) seems to use a particularly Ælfrician idiom, in its use of the verb ‘don’ with the common expression ‘synna forgifenesse.’²⁸ Taken together, these parallels (in a poem only twenty lines long) go far to suggest the poet’s familiarity with Ælfrician alliterative works.

The similar circumstances of these two poems, both written after the Norman Conquest, both preserved in (and probably composed for) *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and both showing knowledge of Ælfric’s works, might ask us to wonder whether they might have been composed by the same figure. The possibility is strengthened by noting that both poets use rhyme to link full lines to one another: in the rhyming passage of *Malcolm and Margaret* (lines 4-8, the only lines lineated as verse by Plummer) and in the final lines of *William the Conqueror*:

Se ælmihtiga God cypæ his saule mildheortnisse
7 do him \his/ synna forgifenesse

(Irvine, *MS E* 98)

(May the Almighty God make mercy known to his soul and grant him forgiveness of his sins.)

Rhyme connecting full lines (rather than half-lines) is conspicuously rare, even in late Old English verse, where the most common rhyme, as later in Layamon, involved verse rhyme, linking the a-line to the b-line. Although *William the Conqueror* is well known for its use of verse rhyme, which *Malcolm and Margaret* uses far less extensively, the unusual use of full-line rhyme, the context of the *Chronicle*, and the evidence of borrowings from Ælfric, when taken together, all suggest the possibility of common authorship, although the preservation of the poems in separate *Chronicle* manuscripts might seem to run counter to that possibility.

Even though they survive today in different *Chronicle* manuscripts, the textual history of the E Chronicle in particular actually supports the possibility that both poems might well have travelled together. As I show in my separate essay on the *Malcolm and Margaret* poem, the E version of the 1067 annal actually includes the beginning of *Malcolm and Margaret*, indicating that

an ancestor of the E manuscript had access to the poem, most of which was therefore cut away at or before the production of E. In annals from 1064 to 1080, the D and E manuscripts, according to Susan Irvine, both derive from ‘a set of northern annals’ (*MS E* lxxxii), and while Irvine characterizes the annals in E after 1080 as being ‘southern rather than northern in their interest’ (lxxxv), it remains the case that William of Malmesbury, in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, made use of a *Chronicle* manuscript that seems not to have extended beyond 1087 (Irvine xxxv). In short, the *Chronicle* manuscript used by William of Malmesbury would seem likely to have included both poems, and since (as David Dumville has put it) the E version of annals up to 1080 ‘looks like a drastic boiling down by someone not very interested in Scottish affairs’ (‘Some Aspects’ 36), we might expect much of the Northern element to have also been expunged from annals between 1080E and 1087E. In short, the textual history of the *Chronicle* supports the notion that there was a version extending to 1087, and that before the E tradition expunged the Northern or Scottish material, it would likely have included both the 1067 and 1086 poems.

It remains only to ask if it is possible to give this anonymous post-Conquest *Chronicle* poet a name. Given the Northern interest of the annals in question, the preservation of some of these annals (including the *Malcolm and Margaret* poem) in the D manuscript of the *Chronicle*, which is generally associated with Worcester, the likely composition of both poems in the 1080s, and the claim by the author of the 1086 annal to have lived at William’s court, one name jumps immediately to mind: St Wulfstan II of Worcester, bishop from 1062 until his death in 1095. Wulfstan II’s immediate predecessor at Worcester was Ealdred, who was elevated to the see of York in 1062 and remained there until his death in 1069. Ealdred himself remained concerned with Worcester during this period and was himself not above producing the occasional bit of rhyming and alliterating Old English verse, as in the marvellous curse that Ealdred directed toward the Norman sheriff of Worcester, Urse d’Abitot: ‘Hattest þu Urs, haue þu Godes kurs’ (Are you called Urs? May you have God’s curse!). It is a perfect line of rhyming and alliterating late Old English verse, although not recorded until the twelfth century in William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Pontificum* (Hamilton 253).²⁹

The close connections between Worcester and York in the eleventh century can easily account for the preservation of annals with a 'Northern element' in Worcester, of course.³⁰

Further, St Wulfstan was himself clearly interested in historical writing in the chronicle mode, and he has been claimed as ultimately commissioning the *Chronicon ex Chronicis* of John of Worcester.³¹ And as Nicholas Brooks has suggested, 'The holy bishop was perhaps concerned with the construction of English identity by means of a history to which both the English-speaking and the Norman-French-speaking members of his community could subscribe' ('Introduction' 9). Certainly, the 1086 annal of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recording William's death would seem to have been written with a similar effect in mind. In a well-known passage, the 1086 annalist writes, 'Gif hwa gewilniged to gewitane hu gedon mann he wæs oððe hwilcne wurðscipe he hæfde oððe hu fela lande he wære hla-ford, ðonne wille we be him awritan swa swa we hine ageaton, ðe him on locodan 7 oðre hwile on his hirede wunedon' (If one should wish to know what sort of man he was, or what honour he had, or how many lands he was lord of, then we shall write about him just as we perceived him, who looked upon him and for some time dwelt in his company; Irvine, *MS E* 96). It is not certain that the prose and verse passages of the annal are by the same author, but neither does there seem to be any clear reason to suggest that they are not.

The case for St Wulfstan II's authorship might be augmented by considering Andy Orchard's remarks upon the Old English style of Coleman, a monk of Worcester during St Wulfstan II's career. William of Malmesbury's translation of Coleman's lost Old English life of St Wulfstan, as Orchard notes, frequently disparages Coleman's 'apparently ornate and overblown style' ('Parallel Lives' 47-8), which seems to have been generally characterized by alliteration and lexical doublets. In this context, we should probably note *Malcolm and Margaret's* translation of 'saluabitur' from I Corinthians 7:14 by the alliterating doublet 'bið gehalgad and gehæled' and also note 'heort oððe hinde' (7a) and 'land oððe eahta' (16a) from *William the Conqueror*. Coleman (who must probably also be a candidate for authorship of these poems) might well have shared an Old English 'Worcester style' with both St Wulfstan and Ealdred – one which used alliteration,

rhyme, and lexical doublets, a poetics dense enough, perhaps, to be labelled ‘ornate and overblown.’ We might note in passing that among the notes signed by Coleman, some comment directly upon Ælfrician texts, which were certainly known at Worcester.³² But if the identification of the poet responsible for these late *Chronicle* poems falls between Coleman and St Wulfstan, the 1086 annalist’s claim to have lived in the court of William would seem to shift the likelihood toward the bishop, rather than the monk. One final (though small) piece of evidence pointing to a Worcester origin may in fact lie in the interlineation of the word ‘leaf-fulle’ above *Malcolm and Margaret*’s ‘rihtwise’; Pope’s textual notes to *De Doctrina Apostolica* indicate that just this reading is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library Hatton 115, later annotated by the so-called tremulous hand of Worcester, and thus possibly at Worcester in the eleventh century. The only other surviving copy of Ælfric’s homily, in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303, reads ‘geleaffulle’ (Pope, *Supplementary Collection* II, 627).³³ The infrequent preservation of this particular homily, however, is itself worth noting, as it was apparently not as widely known as many of Ælfric’s works, which makes Hatton 115’s testimony of a possible Worcester location potentially valuable. Regardless, the interlineation most clearly suggests knowledge of Ælfric’s text on the part of the *Chronicle* scribe, rather than the poet, but it adds to the circumstantial plausibility of the authorial identification, especially if we recall that the D manuscript of the *Chronicle*, especially in its later annals, seems to have been written during Wulfstan II’s episcopacy.³⁴ Cubbin, of course, notes that Wulfstan II makes surprisingly few appearances in the D *Chronicle*, a point that is ‘a source of scholarly discomfort’ (lxxx). Though we are well into the realm of hypothesis, such reticence might be understandable if we see Wulfstan II as taking a personal interest in the text, and we might well imagine a moment of authorial self-effacement in the D *Chronicle*’s general avoidance of comment about Wulfstan II.

In the end, however, this attribution of the authorship of these two *Chronicle* poems is probably not susceptible to any sort of incontrovertible proof, and like the *Chronicle* poets who preceded him, the author of *Malcolm and Margaret* and *William the Conqueror* chose to present both poems anonymously. But a careful consideration of the content, context, and style do work

together, I believe, to suggest a common author for the two poems, and St Wulfstan II (or, again, his school) stands as an especially plausible candidate for their authorship. That St Wulfstan II was himself a reader of late Old English verse, we might recall, is indicated by the presence of the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391, printed by Hughes as *The Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*. If he was not, indeed, an author of these late Old English poems, he was the audience of at least one other late poem, even if not the intended audience.

Conclusions

In her discussion of *The Death of Edward*, the *Chronicle* poem from annal 1065CD, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe very usefully gathers together formulaic parallels to most of that poem's verses as part of a demonstration that the poem was intended 'to sound traditional' ('Deaths and Transformations' 168), and O'Brien O'Keeffe is clear in indicating that she doubts the poem was composed orally. Both positions, I believe, are utterly persuasive. And while O'Brien O'Keeffe's list of formulaic parallels includes unique parallels as well as more widely distributed formulas, it is interesting to note that she identifies unique parallels to poems as diverse as *The Metrical Psalms* (DEdw 3b); *Christ and Satan* (DEdw 7a); *Beowulf* (DEdw 10b); *The Riming Poem* (DEdw 22b); *Andreas* (DEdw 25a); *Guthlac B* (DEdw 27b); and *Judgment Day II* (DEdw 34b). In the context of arguments made in other chapters of this book, it is interesting that no identifiable pattern appears to emerge from this listing of unique parallels: *The Death of Edward* poet either has access to virtually the whole of the poetic tradition as we know it, or else these few parallels are too few to offer any real insight into his or her potential sources. Certainly, no one of these other poems stands out as an especially probable source text.

At least one verse from *The Death of Edward* for which O'Brien O'Keeffe finds no poetic parallels at all, however, may well provide a link to Ælfric's alliterative compositions: *Death of Edward* 24a, 'Eadweard se æðela.' Just as in my discussion of 'Eadmund se eadiga' in [chapter 4](#), I find this word order is notably unusual in Old English, with 'se æðela' placed after the proper noun: I find parallels involving 'se æðela' (and few enough

of them) only in Ælfric's alliterative works: *Sebastian* (LS V) 366a; *Book of Kings* (LS XVIII) 76a; *Theodosius and Ambrose* (Pope XXVI) 7a; and *Letter to Sigefyrth* (Assmann II) 188a.³⁵ Here, too, a unique parallel to a single verse is unlikely to tell us much of value about whether or not Ælfric was a source for the *Death of Edward* poet, but I hope that the investigations undertaken in this chapter stand as a reminder that it is not a mere fool's errand to ask such a question. Eleventh-century poets (including the authors of *The Death of Alfred*, *Malcolm and Margaret*, and *William the Conqueror*, and probably the Bodley 180 prayer) seem to have consulted Ælfric's works with surprising frequency, and to list the unique Ælfrician parallels alongside unique ASPR parallels may well give us a clearer picture of all of these poets' compositional habits.

As the various examples considered in this chapter also suggest, Old English poets in the eleventh century frequently continued to use a literate-formulaic method for their compositions, but drawing poetic formulas from a surprising range of texts that modern readers have generally preferred to identify as 'homiletic' or 'hagiographic' – thus seeing them as prose, rather than verse. In the case of Ælfric's alliterative works, which are especially clearly used by later poets, this formulaic recycling offers additional support for the conclusion that such works were understood as verse during the Anglo-Saxon period, although, like other such indicators, it probably cannot make the case certain in its own right. The apparent recycling of half-line and full-line formulas from the works of Wulfstan the Homilist and from *The Seven Sleepers* may suggest that later readers were, in fact, well accustomed to finding poetic elements in homiletic texts, a possibility clearly supported by the very number of Old English homilies that reuse material from poetic works that were also independently preserved. Clearly, we should hesitate to draw any sort of firm distinction between the 'homiletic' and 'poetic' modes.

The evidence of these eleventh-century poets, it also turns out, is of enormous importance for indicating something of the nature of the audience for Old English verse in the late Anglo-Saxon period. Eleventh-century readers seem to have understood that what we call homilies might be chock-full of poetic expressions, whether their dominant mode was prose or verse: we would come closer to an Anglo-Saxon viewpoint, I think, to see 'homily' and

‘hagiography’ as designating only the content of a work, while the form of a homily or a hagiographic work might be described as prose, verse, or even a combination of the two. Further, however, the examples considered in this chapter (especially in the ways they interact and interlock) indicate just what sorts of Old English verse had the widest audience in the eleventh century. At the very beginning of the century, Ælfric (discussed in the previous chapter) and Wulfstan (discussed in the introduction) appear to have derived formulas from classical works like *Brunanburh* and *Andreas*. But just as the copying, recopying, and recombination of Ælfric’s and Wulfstan’s works suggests that they remained popular during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, later eleventh-century poems (*The Death of Alfred*, *Min Drihten Leof*, the Bodley 180 prayer, the post-Conquest *Chronicle* poems) confirm the popularity of Ælfric and Wulfstan (at the expense of classical verse) by their choice of formulaic sources, just as the (sometimes lengthy) quotation and reuse of poetic texts in other homilies indicates that homilists were primarily reading and recycling late Old English verse, rather than classical works (*The Judgment of the Damned*, *Judgment Day II*, *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, *Min Drihten Leof*, the lost phoenix poem). The infrequent copying of classical Old English verse in the later eleventh century, it seems, really does correspond to a general lack of an audience for such works, a circumstance that is, perhaps, not very surprising at all if the suggestion made in preceding chapters that classical verse was increasingly seen as difficult is correct. With the prominent and notable exception of *The Death of Edward* (in *Chronicle* annal 1065CD), classical verse is virtually absent from the poetic scene in the post-Wulfstanian eleventh century, being generally uncopied, unquoted, and (we might well conclude) unread. By contrast, of course, the poems preserved (even in fragments) in homilies are generally multiply attested (*The Judgment of the Damned*, the phoenix homily) or provide additional attestations of the relevant poems (*Exhortation*, *Judgment Day II*). *Min Drihten Leof* is recorded in three separate manuscripts as well as serving as a source for Napier XXIX. In the eleventh century, it seems, the tradition of anonymity still applied to Old English poetry, but newer poetic compositions, it seems, were much more often subject to multiple copying, just as many of the works of Ælfric

were. This evidence of popularity (if multiple copying can be understood in those terms) must surely put the unique preservation of so many classical poems into perspective: our understanding of the history of Old English poetry, it seems, should recognize and take into account just how late Old English verse played a different role in eleventh-century literary culture than classical verse: the modern scholarly focus on classical verse as the true heart of the poetic tradition more or less willingly abdicates close attention to the eleventh century, asking *The Death of Edward* to bear far too much weight in support of a notion of the continuity of the classical forms. This is not to say that *The Death of Edward* is uninteresting – it is an amazing production, I think – but rather to say that to ask it to exemplify a continuing eleventh-century tradition of classical Old English verse composition actively ignores and underplays the kind of alternative, late Old English verse tradition that can be traced so much more clearly, once we understand what sorts of questions to ask.

In the end, this chapter has tried to suggest that Old English poetry was far from moribund in the eleventh century. Although modern scholars have often not recognized their works, nor known where to look for them, the arguments made here suggest that eleventh-century poets like St Wulfstan II (if we can accept the attribution), the author of *The Death of Alfred*, and the authors of the Bodley 180 and *Min Drihten Leof* prayers looked for their poetic models in the works of Ælfric, in *The Seven Sleepers*, even in the works of Wulfstan, and possibly in *The Metrical Psalms*. All of these little understood or little appreciated poems suggest not the morbidity of the poetic tradition in the eleventh century, but its very vitality, as these late Old English poems exhibit far more cultural presence (as measured by their survival in multiple copies and their reuse in poetic and prose contexts) than we can discover for virtually any works of the classical tradition other than *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Bede's Death Song*. An indicator of just how much there still is to learn about the cultural role of late Old English verse is the fact that homilies may well give us more information about the audience for Old English poetry in the eleventh century than virtually any other source, partly because so many homilies make use of verse and were copied and recopied so often. This chapter (and, indeed, this book) has only

begun to address the questions raised by this valuable data.

6 Conclusion

My attempt to survey the field of Old English verse through the unlikely lenses of ‘author’ and ‘audience’ has largely operated on a single crucial observation: an examination of the development and use of a ‘literate-formulaic’ method of poetic composition at or before King Alfred’s court in the late ninth century allows us to at least partially trace audiences (if, most often, they are probably unintended audiences) for a surprising number of Old English poems, precisely because some readers were poets in turn, recycling rare or unique usages from earlier poems in their own, newer works. The vision of the history of Old English verse that results is both comfortingly familiar and distressingly disorienting. On the one hand, Old English poetry, as I have described it here, remains powerfully traditional, characterized right through the period by its dense use of inherited phraseology and the convention of being generally presented in manuscripts anonymously. But on the other hand, at least from the late ninth century on, we see an ever more dominant tradition of verse that is, at its root, literate rather than oral-formulaic in its orientation, and that moves ever further from the metrical and formulaic conventions of classical Old English poetry. Those very conventions seem to have been perceived by the middle tenth century as archaic and arcane, to the point that interest in classical or pre-Alfredian verse after that time begins to seem both academic and vanishingly rare: fewer poems are composed in the classical metre after the middle tenth century, and fewer classical poems have their verses and lines cited (either in homilies or poems) after the turn of the millennium. The so-called four poetic codices, copied around the turn of the millennium, show few marks of early readership, and their texts do not seem to be recopied in the eleventh century or later, although many late Old English poems are far more often preserved in multiple copies, even if it was not their fate to be collected into grand codices. One might even suspect that late Old English poems did not need to be collected in grand

retrospective volumes because they were perceived as more current and more vital. The four poetic codices may well be the monuments of the classical tradition in more senses than one.

Of course, as I showed by considering the inscriptional tradition described in [chapter 1](#), the literate orientation of the literate-formulaic compositional mode should not be especially surprising. Old English verse had already begun accommodating itself to literacy and its implications as early as the eighth century, and we see in the tradition of memorial inscriptions a formulaic poetic tradition, associated with named commissioners (and hence not entirely anonymous), in which oral transmission and composition seems to play no role at all. The hints that this inscriptional tradition may have had roots in the inherited Germanic runic tradition (the predominance of English runes on the Thornhill stones; continental memorial inscriptions; the Gallehus horn) may suggest that our comfortable associations of Old English verse with orality and anonymity may well have been only partially accurate from a very early period indeed, making Bede's identification of Cædmon as a named author of Old English verse seem at least a little less exceptional and originary.

Nevertheless, the 'wisdom literature' aspects of *Bede's Death Song* and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time* equally remind us of the importance of a highly traditional (and presumably oral or at least oral-derived) strand of eighth-century Old English verse as well. The eighth century, it seems reasonable to suggest, is where we should look to find the most powerful interactions between orality and literacy in terms of Old English verse, even if the literate practices of textualization continued to evolve and develop for some time afterwards.¹ Indeed, although it may not be susceptible to proof, it seems to me likely that the bulk of pre-Alfredian poems identified as being part of 'Alfred's library' in [chapter 2](#) (*Genesis A*, *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, the works of Cynewulf) may well have had eighth-century origins, whether in Bede's Northumbria or in Offa's Mercia. Such hypothetical origins for these poems have, of course, often been proposed; the contribution this book makes to these possible origins lies in offering additional evidence to exclude the possibility of dating these poems to Alfred's reign or later.

It does seem likely that, in contrast to the self-naming practices employed in the Anglo-Latin tradition by Bede and other eighth-

century Anglo-Saxons, the tradition of the anonymous presentation of Old English poems goes back to a fairly early moment in the history of their inscription into manuscripts. It seems possible to suspect that the difference, as I have suggested, may relate to a perception that Latin audiences are distant, while Old English audiences are local, and that, therefore, names are more necessary for contextualizing Latin works. In this context, Cynewulf's self-naming, while not apparently serving to 'authorize' the text according to modern notions of authorship (and indeed, not really working to contextualize those works in quite the same way), might well suggest that he belongs in the 'second wave' of Old English poets, breaking the habit of anonymity through his colophonic requests for prayers.² However, Cynewulf does not seem to have set the pattern for later writers, and the anonymous inscription of Old English verse appears to have become traditional: even much later in the period (as we have seen) poets and scribes almost never attached authorial names to poems unless the author's name was actually placed within the text itself (as with the inscriptional and colophonic traditions, including Alfred's and Wulfsgige's *Metrical Prefaces*, and some of Ælfric's works; recall how frequently and quickly many of Ælfric's individual works began to travel separately from his authorial prefaces and thus quickly became anonymously inscribed).

It is important to note, however, that the resulting anonymous presentation of Old English poems may well have functioned differently for at least some Old English audiences than it does for us. If the arguments presented above in [chapter 3](#) that Æthelwold (or a member of his school) must have composed *The Menologium* as well as *Brunanburh* and the other three earliest *Chronicle* poems, the name of their author would surely have been known to Æthelwold's student Ælfric, who seems to have known these poems and perhaps to have used them as a source for at least some of his own formulas. Likewise, while modern readers must use stylistic differences to conclude that more than one poet was likely at work at Alfred's court, members of Alfred's court must have known exactly who wrote what, even if the manuscripts in which the poems were preserved did not include that information. Again, the initial manuscripts may well have been understood as aimed toward a local audience, while later,

unintended audiences were themselves unable to rediscover poems' original authors for the same reasons that modern scholars have usually been unable to do so.

In this context we must admit, I think, the likelihood that Old English poetic manuscripts were rarely produced with posterity in mind, except perhaps for the four great codices; most Old English poetry seems rather to have been produced for small, well defined, and local audiences, for which the name of the author of any particular work was apparently either already known or else unrecoverable, and perhaps already lost in the depths of time, as it so often is for us. The exceptions, as described above in [chapter 1](#), usually involve cases where manuscripts were produced as part of a larger process of publication and dissemination: *Cædmon's Hymn*, *Bede's Death Song*, Alfred's and Wulfsgige's *Metrical Prefaces*, and the alliterative works of Ælfric. In the case of all these works, the authorial name served primarily to support and justify the multiplication of copies. Ælfric's attempt to associate the authority implied by the time and resources invested in the duplication of his works with the correctness (and hence unchange-ability) of his text seems to have anticipated modern notions of authorship, but Ælfric's obvious inability to control the resulting copies attests to the power of a different cultural logic, in which the usefulness of a text to later writers, compilers, and possibly even scribes was not associated with the authority of an original author, but rather with the local audience envisioned by those later figures. One might hesitate to label this the 'authority of the audience,' but it seems clear that books written for a local audience (local in both time and space) respond to the needs of that audience, and that their needs are very different from the needs of a distant audience.

In any case, the understanding of manuscript poems as being useful to later writers goes back at least to the time of Alfred, and possibly even further back. Precisely in the functioning of the literate-formulaic tradition, the evidence from Alfred's court seems especially clear: while Alfredian poems continue to be highly formulaic, they evidence a clear break from oral-formulaicism by deriving their formulas not from an inherited oral compositional system, but rather directly from manuscript poems available to their authors. The evidence from Alfred's court is complex, but two points (as indicated in [chapter 2](#)) make

this conclusion virtually certain: first, the importation of Old Saxon formulas (which must not have been a part of the Anglo-Saxon oral tradition) into Old English poems by Alfredian authors, and second, the fact that Alfredian poems use unique formulas from a restricted database that did not include the bulk of the poems later collected in the Exeter Book. Alfredian authors must not have composed freely within a living Old English oral tradition, but rather they must have mined their formulas from the poems of 'Alfred's library,' including (although perhaps not limited to) the Old Saxon *Heliand* and *Genesis* as well as the Old English *Genesis A*, *Beowulf*, *Andreas*, and the poems of Cynewulf.

In short, as my arguments throughout this book suggest, a literate-formulaic compositional method supplanted or supplemented the oral-formulaic tradition from at least the late ninth century onward. This is not to say, of course, that the spoken word lost its power in relation to Old English poetry, but rather to simply point out that true oral-formulaic composition after the late ninth century does not seem a particularly good match for the data we have. Poems (and prose as well, for that matter) almost certainly continued to be read aloud, and perhaps even recited from memory, but formulas now circulated in a primarily textual sea, rather than in an oral-formulaic one.³ Crucially, however, the evidence of this literate-formulaic compositional method also gives us valuable (and otherwise inaccessible) information about where and when a number of Old English poems were read. Although the evidence of Alfredian poems cannot tell us where or when *Beowulf* (to take only the most debated example) might have been composed, it is of real importance to know that the poem was available at Alfred's court.⁴ One might note, for example, the number of seemingly poetic compounds that can be found in Alfredian prose (e.g., 'ealdhlaford,' 'woruldsorga,' and 'sondbeorhas,' all found in the prose Boethius): these words take on a somewhat different significance for us, I think, if it is possible that they might derive directly from Alfred's reading of identifiable (or even unidentifiable) Old English or Old Saxon verse. Indeed, I think the Alfredian period emerges from this study as being in need of an extensive reconsideration, at least in part because the recognition of Old Saxon influence and formulaic borrowings (in verse certainly, but possibly also in Alfredian prose) allows a

great deal of potential insight into Alfredian productions and contexts.

As [chapter 3](#) suggests, the literate-formulaic mode operative in Alfred's court was used in the hands of a number of tenth-century poets who continued to use the classical metre. The tenth-century author of *Riddle 40* (here provisionally associated with Dunstan or a member of his school), significantly, had access to a body of formulas quite distinct from that used by the Alfredian poets: the formulas from *Riddle 40* for which only a single, unique parallel survives may seem relatively few, but the parallels are clearly concentrated within the poems now found in the Exeter Book. Whoever (and wherever) the *Riddle 40* poet was, he or she had access to a different library of source poems than was found in Alfred's library, even while using the same literate-formulaic method as Alfredian poets apparently used. The significance of *Riddle 40* is thus disproportionate to its size, not only because of its datability, but because it confirms the value of using unique parallel formulas to trace formulaic sources in post-Alfredian verse. *Riddle 40* suggests that the Exeter collection had largely been gathered together by the date of its own composition, at one location, if not in one book. *Riddle 40*'s own eventual inclusion in the Exeter Book, of course, is easily understood if the Exeter poems were used as poetic models: *Riddle 40* was composed in proximity to those models and then preserved alongside them.

The ascription of *Brunanburh*, the other early *Chronicle* poems, and *The Menologium* to Æthelwold or his school must probably also remain speculative, although the lexical, metrical, alliterative, formulaic, and contextual evidence presented in [chapter 3](#), I think, makes the possibility more than merely plausible. But just as important, the unique formulaic parallels observed between these poems and the poems identified as being in Alfred's library suggests that Alfred's collection must have remained largely intact at least until the middle of the tenth century. Whether this library was lodged at one of Winchester's monastic houses, remained with the West Saxon ruling family, or even became associated with the royal writing office is probably undeterminable now, although any of these three possibilities might explain both how it could remain intact until the 950s or 960s, when Æthelwold seems to have had access to it, and why it might have been lodged at Winchester. That this library of poems

would have attracted Æthelwold's attention seems certain: his interests in arcane poetic Old English vocabulary have been ably documented in Mechthild Gretsch's *Intellectual Foundation of the English Benedictine Reform*. But what seems not to have been sufficiently appreciated about the poems in this 'Æthelwoldian' group is the degree to which their metrical conservatism and hypertraditional diction must have marked them as difficult even for their earliest audiences.

Clearly, before *The Menologium* had been composed (probably in the 970s) *The Metrical Psalms* had been at least partially completed, since the *The Menologium* includes a quotation from them. But the metrical features of *The Metrical Psalms* mark them as belonging to the tradition of late Old English verse, while *Riddle 40* and the 'Æthelwoldian' poems are far more classical in form.⁵ Additional evidence for the ascendancy of late Old English verse by the 970s or 980s can be found in the Vercelli book, where homilies II and XXI, respectively, make use of the late Old English poems *The Judgment of the Damned* (known only from being recycled in homilies) and *An Exhortation to Christian Living* (which is preserved independently). That passages from these late Old English poems were being incorporated into prose homilies at roughly the same moment as *The Death of Edgar* was being written should probably be taken to confirm that the use of late Old English verse forms in *The Metrical Psalms* was perfectly in line with contemporary practice, and that the Æthelwoldian poems, by contrast, really would have been correspondingly difficult for a contemporary audience. A generation later, *The Battle of Maldon* must have seemed even more archaic and difficult to those not trained in Æthelwold's school.

Ælfric, in apparent contrast to the *Maldon* poet, certainly envisioned an audience of readers (and listeners) who were not trained in such a dense poetic style, and his own alliterative compositions, I believe, should be understood as developing the practices of late Old English verse quite straightforwardly. As I suggested in [chapter 4](#), Ælfric made more use of formulaic composition and poetic vocabulary than has often been acknowledged, suggesting an essential continuity with tenth-century poetry. And to me there seems to be no good reason to continue to describe Ælfric's works as prose: not only are they metrically indistinguishable from late Old English verse, but they

employ poetic alliteration and vocabulary, a method of composition indistinguishable from the literate-formulaic composition used in earlier poems (though Ælfric mines his own work for formulas, rather than the works of others), and, as the Vercelli homilies once again make clear, were produced in an environment that clearly saw poetic adornment as entirely consonant with homiletic content. Even the pointing of Ælfric's alliterative works often appears to be metrical. Surely, to suggest that a prose writer borrowed a habit of alliteration, and a metrical structure, and a compositional method, and at least some highly traditional poetic vocabulary, and a pointing practice, and even occasional poetic formulas from poetry, and yet was still writing prose, begins to sound like special pleading. Ælfric's poetry does not sound like the poetry of *Beowulf* and *Maldon*, but that difference may capture precisely why it was so much more widely copied and read through the eleventh century and into the twelfth.

Certainly, the evidence presented in [chapter 4](#) to suggest that Ælfric knew at least some classical Old English verse is strikingly paralleled by Wulfstan's apparent knowledge of *Andreas*. And while I have made no argument here that Wulfstan's two-stress phrases should be seen as verse (although that old question, too, may deserve renewed attention), it is certain that Wulfstan, like Ælfric and the compiler or compilers of Vercelli II and XXI, saw no conflict at all between homiletic content and poetic words and formulas. Nor, it seems, did later eleventh-century poets, such as the separate authors of *The Death of Alfred* and (fifty years later) *William the Conqueror*, as they appear to have used Ælfric's works as a formulaic source for their own works composed in the literate-formulaic mode. If we needed additional evidence that Ælfric's alliterative works have the ring of the poetic, the testimony of these later poets would seem to provide it. Even if we take the most conservative position, though, the evidence marshalled in [chapter 5](#) is sufficient to demonstrate that there was such extensive overlap between homily and verse during the late Anglo-Saxon period that poets might have borrowed formulaic verses from texts of either sort, as *The Death of Alfred* poet's apparent use of at least one line from *The Seven Sleepers* might suggest. And as my discussion of *Min Drihten Leof* and the Bodley 180 prayer indicates, eleventh-century homilies and other

texts may yet prove to include even more unrecognized poetry than has been identified so far. The use of poems and poetic effects in prose homilies, however, should probably not be taken to indicate that the boundary between poetry and prose was fluid or non-existent: the use of poetic effects in a prose homily is evidence of precisely the opposite, in that it attests to a perception that audiences will respond to even a local and temporary shift in register. The Bodley 180 poet's ability to extract 'wyrhta 7 waldend ealra gesecafta' from Wulfstan the Homilist's works is a vivid demonstration of that very perception.

The modern audience for Old English verse, it seems, has so fully immersed itself in the formulas, diction, and style of *Beowulf* and other classical compositions that it has failed to appreciate how difficult such works must have been, even for the original tenth- and eleventh-century readers of the surviving 'four great poetic manuscripts.' Understanding the complex traditionality of late tenth-century poems like *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Menologium*, however, powerfully contextualizes their metrical and formulaic conservatism, even while it also accounts for their metrical and alliterative idiosyncrasies. The quotation from *The Metrical Psalms* that appears in *The Menologium*, however, can serve to remind us that even the *Menologium* poet knew and could appreciate works from the late Old English verse tradition – a useful reminder to us that we might do well to value late Old English poems equally highly. *The Metrical Psalms*, the alliterative works of Ælfric, and the eleventh-century poems discussed in [chapter 5](#) may not share the diction or metrical forms of the classical poetic tradition, but they do share a literate-formulaic mode of composition, a surprising (although lesser) amount of traditional poetic diction, and even a handful of individual formulas. The cultural prominence of these late Old English poems suggests that they are not a mere 'popular' tradition, as an earlier generation of scholars might have phrased it; the likelihood that the late *Chronicle* poems *Malcolm and Margaret* and *William the Conqueror* might have been composed by no less a figure than St Wulfstan II of Worcester reminds us of this tradition's cultural power. If we have any hope of being a sensitive audience for Old English verse in our own time, we must learn to appreciate this late tradition of Old English verse on its own terms, I believe, and we must give as much attention to

properly identifying and editing its corpus as has been expended on identifying and editing the works of Ælfric and Wulfstan, and we must reconceptualize our vision of poetry throughout the period. We must learn to listen – and read – more carefully.

Appendix Two Unrecognized Late Old English Poems

This appendix contains brief and provisional editions (without the depth of attention to issues of manuscript context, linguistic precision, and textual variation proper to a full-fledged edition) of two previously unrecognized late Old English poems as mentioned in [chapter 5](#) above. My purpose in this appendix is merely to offer a lineation for these works as verse, along with a minimal commentary on their most outstanding poetic features and their possible connections. I also present in the notes some (very brief) discussion of formulaic parallels and possible sources, according to the probability that these works were composed within the ‘literate-formulaic’ poetic tradition that appears to have characterized the eleventh century.

Min Drihten Leof

This confessional prayer is preserved in three different manuscript contexts. First, it is found in a mid-eleventh-century hand on fol. 6v of the Royal Psalter: London, British Library Royal 2. B. v; the text below is edited from this manuscript. *Min Drihten Leof* is also included in the vast anthology of London, British Library Cotton Tiberius A. iii (also from the middle of the eleventh century), and (in a somewhat different or modified form) in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391, the so-called *Portiforium of Saint Wulstan*.

This prayer has been edited most recently (with a text based upon Tiberius A. iii) by Pulsiano and McGowan, but it appears that the copy in the Royal Psalter is textually superior to the others, and it is that version which I choose as my base text. The pointing and capitalization are those of the Royal Psalter text; I expand abbreviations here (other than the Tironian ‘7’ for ‘ond’) and mark them with italics.

Min drihten leof
for þinre þære micelan mildheortnyse.
7 for ealra þinra haligra lufan 7 geearnungca.
gemiltsa me synfullum. swa swa þin æra willa si.
7 min mod to þinum willan gestranga. 7
gestaðola. 5

7 min drihten
ne læt me næfre færlicum deaðe
of þissum earman life gewitan. ac loce hwenne
min tima beo. 7 þin willa si.
þæt ic þis læne lif forlætan
sceole. 10
læt me mid gedefnyse mine dagas geendian.

Eac ic bidde þe min drihten leof
for þines sylfes godnisse. þæt þu me of þissere worulde ne
læte.

ær ic þurh þine micelan mildheortnyse
forgyfenysse hæbbe. ealles þæs þe ic
æfre 15

ongean þinne mæran willan geworhte. dæges oððe nihtes.
gewealdes oððe ungewealdes. on worde. oððe on weorce.
oððe on minum þystrum gepance. Heofona heahcýning.
ealles middaneardes onlýsend. gemiltsa me earminge.
swa swa þu wille. 7 þurh þæt þæt ðu
wille. 20

7 syle me minra gylta arfulle forgyfennesse
ge on þisson life. ge on þa m toweardan.

7 min drihten forgyf me
soðe hreowe. 7 andetnyse. 7 bote minra synne.

7 ahwyrf me fram
minum unrihtwisnyssum 25
to þinum willan. 7 to minre þearf.

7 min drihten forgyf me
rihten geleafan 7 soðe lufe
7 eadmodnyse. 7 arfæstnyse.

7 clænnysse. 7
onbryrdnyse. 30

7 strenco wið deofles costnunga. 7 geþild on
earfoðnyssum.

7 gemetfæstnyssse on gesundfulnyssum

And min drihten genehxa

þa heardheortnyssse minre þære stænenran heortan.

7 forgif me

teara genihtsumnyssse.

35

þæt ic mæge þa misdæda bewepan. 7 behreowsian.

þe ic earming dæghwamlice ongear þinne willan gewyrce.

And min drihten leof. onliht minre heortan geþanc

mid lifes andgyte. 7 onliht mine word. 7 dæda.

7 minne lichaman 7 sawle 7 eall min

lif

40

mid gastlicum andgyte. 7 forgyf me þine mildheortnyssse

ge on þyssum life. ge on þam toweardan.

and min drihten ælmihtig god. Si þe lof 7 wuldor 7 þanc

a on ecnyssse. 7 eallum þinum halgum.

ealra þæra gyfena. 7 miltsa 7

goda.

45

þe ðu me æfre forgeafe. 7 ealra þæra ara

þe ðu me synfullum to forlete.

Ic bidde þe min drihten

eadmodlice þæt ðu helpe ealra minra

freonda. 7 maga. 7 ealra þæra þe to minre

gebedrædene

50

þencað. 7 hyhtað lybbendra 7 forðgewitenra.

7 forgyf ðam lybbendon gesundfulnyssse on þissum life.

7 on þam toweardan ece myrhðe.

7 syle þam forðgewitenum heora gylta arfulle

forgyfennesse.

7 heofonan rices gefean a on

ecnyssse.

55

Eac ic bidde þe min drihten

þæt ðu gemiltsige eallum þam þe me

god dydon. 7 god tæhton 7 syle ece forgyfennysse

eallum þam þe me æfre yfel cwædon

oððe þohton oððe gyte to donne

þencað.

60

7 gestranga hi to þinum willan. 7 gemiltsa eallum
 cristenum folce. lybbendum 7 forðgewitenum.
 eallum þam þe æfre fulwihtes bæð underfengon.
 Si þe lof 7 wuldor a butan ende
 amen

65

Notes to *Min Drihten Leof*

The *Min Drihten Leof* prayer is preceded at the top of fol. 6v by the Latin descriptive heading ‘Oratio pro peccatis’; the prayer is, notably, written in two columns on fol. 6v of the manuscript, a page originally left blank. Among the texts on the immediately preceding page, fol. 6r, can be found the Royal copy of Dobbie’s *Latin-English Proverbs*, preceded by two proverbs in Latin and Old English also found among the *Durham Proverbs*; both these proverbs (like many of the *Durham Proverbs*) can be scanned as late Old English verse. These proverbs, like the prior texts on fol. 6r, are written in one column, across the width of the page. The presence of the poetic proverbs immediately preceding *Min Drihten Leof* offers contextual support for, but in itself cannot prove, the possibility that *Min Drihten Leof* may also be a verse text, as edited here.

As discussed in [chapter 5](#), the evidence for considering the *Min Drihten Leof* (MDL) prayer as poetic revolves around a number of phrases and expressions that clearly show evidence of formulaic composition. Specifically:

MDL 2: for þinre þære micelan mildheortnysse.

MDL 14: ær ic þurh þine micelan mildheortnysse

These lines are closely related to a number of lines in *The Metrical Psalms*. Also, both verses in

MDL 18: oððe on minum þystrum gepance. Heofona
 heahcyning.

have their closest analogues in the poetic tradition, as discussed in [chapter 5](#). ‘Heahcyning’ in particular appears to be a specifically poetic word, and the alliterative collocation with

'heofona' seems specifically poetic. A number of nominal doublets in the text (*MDL* 16b, 'dæges oððe nihtes'; *MDL* 17b, 'on worde. oððe on weorce.'; *MDL* 50a, 'freonda. 7 maga'; and *MDL* 39b, '7 onliht mine word. 7 dæda.') have parallels in prose as well as verse, although they clearly add to the verse effect here, as does *MDL* 17a, 'gewealdes oððe ungewealdes.'

Some words and phrases here belong to the Winchester vocabulary or derive more directly from Ælfrician texts, including 'behreowsian' (36b) and 'gastlican andgite' (41b). The order of words 'lof and wuldor' (43b, 64a), while used by Ælfric, is less typical than 'wuldor and lof' (which Ælfric prefers), but 'lof and wuldor' is the preferred order for Wulfstan the Homilist. The rhyming collocation of 'drihten' and 'ælmihtig' is not used by Wulfstan, but it does appear in Ælfric.

Of the sixty-five lines printed above, nine appear to involve extrametrical direct address, and (as such) are exempt from alliteration requirements. Fifty of the fifty-six remaining lines appear to be linked by some sort of alliteration or rhyme. Alliteration of 'pam' and 'pisson' should probably be understood in 22 and 42 as well as alliteration (perhaps strengthened by rhyme) on 'pinum' in 26a. Alliteration on the preposition 'on' (occasionally allowed in Ælfric) appears to operate in 53a. Lines 9 and 61 presumably involve off-rhyme. Four of the six unlinked lines show alliterative links to a preceding or following line. All of these features have frequencies similar to those seen in Ælfric's alliterative works.

On these grounds, it seems reasonable to conclude that the entire prayer has a verse intention, but at the very least, the passage between lines 15 and 20 must derive from a verse source, if it is not in itself verse. The notion that the entire work is verse is supported, however, by the Bodley 180 prayer, which borrows material from *Min Drihten Leof* in ways that suggest that literate-formulaic composition is operative.

The Bodley 180 Prayer

This prayer is preserved uniquely at the end of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 180, apparently in the hand of the main scribe, although perhaps at a different moment of writing (Ker, *Catalogue* 359). The most recent edition of this prayer is in Sedgefield's

edition of Alfred's Boethius; the pointing and capitalization here are those of the manuscript, but manuscript abbreviations (again with the exception of '7') are expanded and indicated with italics (my thanks to Susan Irvine for helping me determine these features of manuscript presentation).

Drihten ælmihtiga god
wyrhta 7 wealdend ealra gesceafta
ic bidde þe for þinre micelan mildheortnessan.
7 for þære halegan rode tacne.
7 for Sancta
Marian mægðhade. 5
7 for Sancte Michaelles gehyrsumnesse.
7 for ealra þinra halgana lufan 7 heora earnungum
þæt þu me gewissige bet þonne ic awyrhte to þe.
7 gewissa me to þinum willan
7 to mi[n]re sawla þearfe bet þonne ic sylf
cunne. 10
7 gestapela min mod to þinum willan 7 to minre sawla
pearfe.
7 gestranga me wið þæs deofles costnungum.
7 afyrre fram me þa fulan galnysse.
7 æl\c/e unrihtwisnysse. 7 gescylde me
wið minum wiðerwinnum. gesewenlicum 7
ungesewenlicum. 15
7 tæc me þinne willan to wyrcene
þæt ic mæge þe inweardlice lufian toforon eallum þingum
mid clænum geþance. 7 mid clænum lichaman.
fo[r]þon þe þu eart min sceoppend. 7 min alesend.
min fultum. min frofer. min trewnes. 7 min tohopa.
20
si þe lof. 7 wylder. nu. 7 a. a.
a to worulde buton æghwilcu m ende
Amen.

Notes to the Bodley 180 Prayer

As discussed in [chapter 5](#), the phrase 'wyrhta 7 wealdend ealra gesceafta' seems to be a characteristic Wulfstanian phrase, and is

likely borrowed directly from Wulfstan. The possibility that the text in question is by Wulfstan seems to be ruled out by the phrase ‘Drihten ælmihtig,’ as that rhyme is never used by Wulfstan (though it appears, of course in *MDL* 43a). Direct dependence upon *MDL* is made likely by parallels between Bodley 180 prayer 2 (cf. *MDL* 2), 7 (cf. *MDL* 3), 11a (cf. *MDL* 5), 12 (cf. *MDL* 31a), and 15b (cf. *MDL* 37b). The number of close correspondences seems large enough to support a hypothesis of direct dependence. The collocation ‘fulan galnysse’ is otherwise restricted to works of Ælfric, suggesting another more or less direct influence.

Although the Bodley 180 prayer does (given the lineation above) feature one three-syllable verse (5b), such verses may have been tolerated occasionally in late Old English verse. A verse intention seems to be strikingly indicated by the remarkable sequence ‘a. a. a’ in lines 21b-2a, which would be exceptional in prose, but is plausible considering the lineation given here. Seventeen of the relevant twenty-one lines show alliteration, and all four remaining lines (4, 12, 19, and 21) show alliterative linkages with a preceding or following line.

The York ‘Bidding Prayer’

An additional indicator of a probable relation between the *Min Drihten Leof* and Bodley 180 prayers lies in the first portion of the bidding prayer printed from the York Gospels (York, Minster Library, Add. 1; Ker no. 402 and Gneuss no. 774) by Stevenson:

Wutan we gebiddan God ealmihtine, heofena heah cyning, *and* Sancta Marian, *and* ealle Godes halgan þæt we moton Godes ælmihtiges willan gewyrcean þa hwil þe we on þyssan lænan life wunian þ æt hy us gehealdan *and* gescyldan wið ealra feonda costnunga, gesenelicra *and* ungesenelicra, Pater noster.

(‘Yorkshire Surveys’ 10)

The sequence ‘God-Sancta Marian-halgan’ is paralleled in the Bodley 180 prayer, as is the pairing of ‘gesenelicra *and* ungesenelicra.’ ‘Heofena heah cyning’ is closely paralleled in *MDL* 18b, of course, as is the phrase ‘pys-san lænan life’ (*MDL* 10a). Both *Min Drihten Leof* and the Bodley 180 prayer include phrases that parallel ‘willan gewyrcean’ and ‘wið ealra feonda costnunga,’

making a determination of which work is closer in these cases impossible. None of the parallels on its own, presumably, would justify asserting a definitive relationship, but the fact that most of the significant phrases in this short paragraph have close parallels in one or the other of the prayers in question seems to suggest that these prayers were known to the author of the York bidding prayer, thus adding support for the possibility of a shared history for the two antecedent prayers. Importantly, Ker dates the hand of the York bidding prayer to the first half of the eleventh century (*Catalogue* 469), suggesting that *Min Drihten Leof* and the Bodley 180 prayer may have early eleventh-century dates of composition.

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- 1 The point about the essential anonymity of Old English verse is a common one, and it is impossible to cite every scholar who makes it, but it is worthwhile to note a few clear examples in surveys and introductory texts, as they serve to articulate the current state of the field. Daniel Donoghue, for example, writes: ‘All but a few of the Old English poems are anonymous’ (*Old English Literature* xii). Donald Scragg, in his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, describes Cynewulf as ‘the only other named poet of note from the period’ (the first being Cædmon), although acknowledging that King Alfred and Wulfstan the Homilist ‘are associated with some surviving verse’ (‘Nature’ 56).
- 2 A similar point is made by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, in the fourth edition of *Klaeber’s Beowulf*, where it is likely to be influential: ‘In a society such as that of Anglo-Saxon England, where much knowledge was disseminated by oral means and through face-to-face encounters, an audience would not normally have experienced a heroic poem as a fixed text such as we find in the Cotton MS. This explains some marked differences between modern and early medieval literary attitudes, accounting for, among other things, the anonymity of most Old English poems’ (clxxxi).
- 3 I am less inclined to agree, obviously, with Swan’s follow-up claim that ‘in the great majority of cases, however, texts from Anglo-Saxon England which survive today with no authorial attribution will also have been “anonymous” when they were first read or heard’ (72). Such a position seems to presume that the author of a text would not have been the first to read it aloud to an audience, or else that modesty or other concerns would prevent such an author from admitting to the text’s authorship.
- 4 Malcolm Godden’s recent essay ‘Did King Alfred Write Anything?’ makes any firmer statement of Alfred’s literal authorship impossible. Yet the attachment of Alfred’s name to these works clearly still serves to attach his authority to the works; in that sense, the attribution of his authorship served a cultural function for at least some Anglo-Saxon readers, even if he was not the actual composer of any of the texts associated

with his name.

- 5 I will distinguish these two Wulfstans as ‘Wulfstan the Homilist’ and ‘Wulfstan II,’ following the practice of Lapidge, et al., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*. Brief biographical notes on all of the figures named so far (except Alfred’s Bishop Wulfsige) can be found in this *Encyclopaedia*.
- 6 See, for example, Joyce Hill’s recent comment about the prefatorial material in Ælfric manuscripts, where the authorial ascription is generally lodged: ‘The author’s prefatory material ... in the Ælfrician corpus as in others tends to be dropped fairly early in transmission sequences’ (‘Identifying “Texts”’ 28). But also, the work of identifying works by Ælfric and Wulfstan is not necessarily done, either; see Thomas Hall’s recent essay ‘Wulfstan’s Latin Sermons,’ which attributes a previously unattributed Latin homily to Wulfstan the Homilist.
- 7 Foucault’s essay usefully and conveniently presents the central issues surrounding conceptions of authorship and the necessity of historicizing them, and while he makes no specific reference to the Anglo-Saxon period, I will use his essay as a touchstone text for considering the relevant issues. Perhaps because of the frequency of anonymous presentation of Old English texts, notions of authorship have rarely been addressed critically in Anglo-Saxon studies, although Ælfric’s concepts of authorship have been dealt with by Joyce Hill (‘Changing Text’) and, recently, Paul Szarmach (‘Ælfric Revises’) – the latter essay explicitly engaging Foucault. Mary Swan’s 2001 survey ‘Authorship and Anonymity’ in relation to Anglo-Saxon texts is (as the bibliography of her essay suggests) one of the few extended considerations of the topic in its own right.
- 8 As Foucault writes, ‘if a text should be discovered in a state of anonymity – whether as a consequence of accident or the author’s explicit wish – the game becomes one of rediscovering the author’ (109). As briefly noted above, the widespread anonymous presentation of Anglo-Saxon texts has meant that this particular dynamic has an especially great power in Anglo-Saxon studies, not only for the establishment of corpora for Ælfric and Wulfstan, but also for many other important figures: King Alfred, Æthelwold of Winchester, Byrhtferth of Ramsey, and numerous Anglo-Latin writers. Much of this work is, in fact,

ongoing.

- 9 See Pasternack's comment: 'I do not use the term "written", because that word has implied a textuality in which not only is the poet absent from the text's performance but, in addition, the reader constructs an authorial voice through the text, identifying the thoughts and the particular words with the author' (2). Elsewhere, it seems clear that Pasternack also opposes 'written' to 'oral' in such a way as to suggest that 'inscribed' serves to emphasize that readers respond not to the original performance of the text (i.e., whether the text was originally performed orally or in writing), but to the present performance of the manuscript itself (see, for example, the discussion in *Textuality* 12-21).
- 10 Both of these points are also made by Allen Frantzen: 'Old English poetry,' he writes, 'survives in more registers, and in far more ambiguous registers, than the critical and scholarly traditions seem to allow for' ('Diverse Nature' 15), where 'four manuscripts dominate' (6).
- 11 The four poetic manuscripts are another critical commonplace. Scragg writes of 'the four so-called Poetic Codices' ('Nature' 56), while Mitchell and Robinson's *Guide* curiously says, 'Apart from *The Meters of Boethius* and the Metrical Version of the Psalms found in the Paris Psalter, the bulk of Old English poetry is to be found in four manuscripts' (141); the reason for considering the *Meters* and *Psalms* 'apart from' the bulk of Old English verse is far from clear, although it highlights the degree to which the four key books are centralized in the minds of Anglo-Saxonists.
- 12 Thus Pasternack's study explicitly omits 'the Paris Psalter (as too close a translation), riddles (as often too short for my purposes), and poetry that presented special problems because of its uses or contexts within prose documents, for example the charms, the *Meters of Boethius*, the poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*' (31). The exclusion of *The Meters*, *The Metrical Psalms*, and the *Chronicle* poems in particular announces the degree to which Pasternack avoids poems most strongly associated with a Latin or otherwise literate tradition.
- 13 The term 'oral-derived' in works concerned with 'Oral Theory' is employed to designate works apparently composed in literate

circumstances, but which continue to exhibit features inherited from an actual oral tradition; paradoxically, the term thus expresses the essential continuity of traditional expression through the term ‘oral’ rather than ‘tradition.’ For ‘Oral Theory,’ see Amodio, *New Directions in Oral Theory*, especially his ‘Introduction: Unbinding Proteus.’

- 14 See my essay ‘Boundaries’ for the argument that scribal treatment of the boundary between prose and verse is essentially the same, whether or not the passage of verse in question belongs to the classical or late tradition.
- 15 Bede’s Cædmon narrative – and the contemporary response to it – has been the subject of a number of important readings, especially those of Frantzen (*Desire*, [chapter 5](#)), Kiernan (‘Someone Else’s Glosses’), Lerer (42-8), and Lees and Overing ([chapter 1](#)). Frantzen’s discussion of the place of the Cædmon story as an originary fixture in literary histories of the period is particularly valuable, and it usefully summarizes the critical tradition. Kiernan’s treatment of the centrality or marginality of the *Hymn* in the Latin Bede, the Old English Bede, and in literary anthologies also effectively addresses the cultural function of the *Hymn* as part of an originary narrative.
- 16 Recent commentators who continue to describe the figure in the dream as an angel include Keefer (16), Fulk and Cain (142), and Amodio (*Writing the Oral Tradition* 24). This interpretation is natural enough, of course, but it is important to note that it is an interpretation, and not a feature of Bede’s text.
- 17 I cite Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica (HE)* by book and chapter number, supplemented by page number from the edition of Colgrave and Mynors. Throughout, translations are my own, though in the case of Bede often aided by at least a glance at the modern English version of Colgrave and Mynors.
- 18 Specifically, Cædmon’s status as an author in Bede’s formulation here has two components: he is a producer of Old English verse and he is a figure of authority, as the role reversal between himself and his teachers makes clear.
- 19 This reading of the role of audience, I think, complements Lees and Overing’s recent reading of the way in which Hild’s role is downplayed or elided in Bede’s account of Cædmon ([chapter](#)

- 1). Though Lees and Overing engage the issue in somewhat different terms, my analysis suggests that Bede downplays Hild's role because her role involves the issue of the agency of the audience, to which Bede's author-oriented perspective is opposed. The gender dynamics of Hild's elision, then, are very much part and parcel of Bede's narrative of origins and authorship, just as Lees and Overing suggest.
- 20 One index of the power of this association in Latin literature is seen in the frequency with which the authors of Latin works attach their own names to them. For a recent survey of just how many prominent named authors there are in the Anglo-Latin tradition alone, see Joseph P. McGowan.
- 21 Mary Swan (referencing Joyce Hill) also draws just such a comparison between the use of 'source authority' in both Bede and Ælfric (78). Such source authority, of course, is also evident in many modern contexts, including notes such as this one.
- 22 The relationship between authorial names and *auctoritas* in a somewhat later period is extensively and effectively discussed by Minnis, who suggests (among other things) that the later medieval scholastic attitudes he describes were probably emergent during the Anglo-Saxon period, being shaped by figures such as Gregory, Bede, and (in the century after Bede) Remigius of Auxerre. Specifically, the *auctoritas* which concerns Minnis was associated with the more or less distant past ('the only good *auctor* was a dead one' as Minnis puts it, 12), and Minnis's work describes how scholastic writers constructed past *auctores* (in part) through the process of historically localizing them; as such Minnis's discussion does not primarily address authors' own naming practices as related to the theories of authorship under discussion. My interest here lies in the ways in which authorial naming and anonymity worked in contemporary contexts, rather than in the backwards-looking formations of the scholastics; as such my method will rely primarily upon a close examination of Anglo-Saxon practice.
- 23 In the context of Hild's Whitby, however, Cædmon's own authority was presumably mediated by both the 'source authority' of those who provided him with material to translate into poetry and by the authority of those 'more learned men'

who tested his composition.

- 24 Recall Bede's understanding that Ceolwulf is likely to have more copies produced: copies which are quite clearly removed in space and time from Bede's own person.
- 25 Note that Dobbie's transcription of these verses from the same manuscript (printed as the third version of *Bede's Death Song* in ASPR VI, 108) is somewhat different, as Colgrave and Mynors have emended and normalized the text to some extent.
- 26 The explicitly vocal context of Bede's recital of *Bede's Death Song* clearly opens the door for the possibility of reading Bede as a tradition-bearer, passing along a traditional bit of oral verse that might (for Bede) have existed literally without any written antecedent. Even more than in the story of *Cædmon's Hymn*, traditional verse expression and originary literary composition are potentially opposed in our consideration of Bede's 'authorship' of these verses.
- 27 *Maxims II* is preserved in the C manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: London, Cotton Tiberius B. i. This book is dated by Ker to the first half of the eleventh century (*Catalogue* 251), and the date is also accepted by O'Brien O'Keeffe in her 2001 edition of the C Chronicle. Fulk offers no comment on the possible date of composition of *Maxims II*.
- 28 Modern critical reading practices may be one reason for the general focus on narrative verse, although the prominence of oral-formulaic criticism may also play a role. Originally, oral-formulaic analysis served as a way to describe the composition of long verse narratives, as Lord's frequent references to 'epic' indicate. The fact that the 'four great poetic codices' all prominently feature long verse narratives may reinforce modern readers' perception of their centrality.
- 29 Bethurum suggests that 'the question arises whether or not in the passages of most regular rhythm Wulfstan copies the measures of verse. In general he does not' (94). McIntosh's whole discussion, of course, is titled 'Wulfstan's Prose.' More recently Momma places Wulfstan even farther from verse than Ælfric in her chapter 'Hierarchy of Verse-likeness' (*Composition* 7-27).
- 30 Passages on Table I.1 were collected by DOE online corpus

searches: an ordered proximity search for ‘an-,’ ‘ece-,’ and ‘god-’ and a proximity search for ‘wald-’ /‘weald-’ and ‘wyrht-.’ The passages from the laws of Æthelred are quoted from that source; the Bodley 180 Prayer is quoted from Sedgfield. All relevant results (except for the examples from ASPR poems, cited below) are shown.

- 31 On Wulfstan’s prose as highly formulaic, see especially Orchard, ‘Crying Wolf.’
- 32 Ker places the date of the Vercelli manuscript in the second half of the tenth century (*Catalogue* 460); Donald Scragg’s edition of the Vercelli Homilies accepts Ker’s date. The composition date of *Andreas* is usually placed in the ninth century; see for example, Fulk 64 and [chapter 2](#), below.
- 33 DOE online corpus search, ‘wuldorpr-.’
- 34 See Chapman, ‘Poetic Compounding,’ 411. The list should probably also be expanded to include ‘wealaf.’ It is worth noting in this context that Richard Dance hypothesizes that Wulfstan may have directly lifted ‘wæpengewrixl’ from its appearance in *Brunan-burh* (‘Sound, Fury and Signifiers’ 60), suggesting a relationship between Wulfstan’s works and that poem quite similar to what I am describing for *Andreas*.
- 35 Lutz cites E.G. Stanley’s important treatment of this spelling in his ‘Spellings of the *Waldend* Group.’
- 36 Of course, if we see Ælfric’s alliterative works as poetic (as I have argued in *Early English Metre*), then we would have certain knowledge that Wulfstan elsewhere recycles and transforms poetic forms into his own style.
- 37 A third kind of audience occupies a sort of middle ground: the audience imagined by the compiler of a manuscript, who may well have been the ‘author’ of none of the texts it contained. One recent study that considers precisely this sort of audience is Dockray-Miller’s ‘Female Devotion and the Vercelli Book.’
- 38 The study of ‘unintended audiences’ for Old English prose has flourished recently in examinations of post-Conquest readers and producers of Old English. See the various essays collected in Swan and Treharne, as well as Treharne’s recent ‘Reading from the Margins’ essay.
- 39 The identification of Wulfstan as author was first made in Jost’s

1923 article; the passages are printed as verse in Plummer's edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; Angus McIntosh observes that these passages' identification as verse has been 'accepted implicitly' (117), although the force of his paper would seem to redefine them as prose; Bethurum describes the passages as 'two poems – if such they can be called' (47). See also the comments of Donald Scragg, noted above in note 1. For the most recent editions of *Chronicle* manuscripts D (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. iv) and E (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 636), see Cubbin, *MS D*, and Irvine, *MS E*.

- 40 At the least, Wulfstan appears to have borrowed part of the phrasing of the 959DE poem directly from Ælfric's epilogue to Judges, which praises Edgar in similar terms; see Plummer's comment in *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ii, 152. That the 959DE passage borrows from Ælfric and not the other way around seems to be widely accepted; see, for example, Godden, 'The Relations' 364.
- 41 *Chronicle* manuscript B is London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. vi; C is London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius C. i. For the Mercian Register in general, and its manuscript presentation in particular, see Szarmach's discussion in 'Æðflæd of Mercia.'
- 42 In the D *Chronicle*, the Mercian Register annals no longer appear together as a group and their content is integrated with the originally separate annals into a single annalistic sequence.
- 43 Note that, as pointed out in my discussion above, the manifest corruption of a manuscript text might serve to announce to its reader its inauthenticity, leading the reader to hypothesize an earlier (authorial or pseudoauthorial) stage of the text characterized by an authentic, uncorrupted text. In such a case, the inauthenticity of a manuscript text leads to the reader's invocation of an author function in order to recover the possibility of both authenticity and an authoritative text; in the Mercian Register example, the author function is invoked to explain the simultaneous authenticity of two portions of a single authoritative text. In both cases, the author function is associated with a previous stage of textual history, despite the differing perceptions of authenticity on the part of the reader. These examples, then, show that while the authority and the

authenticity of a text are related, they are not configured identically.

- 1 See Kiernan, ‘Someone Else’s Glosses,’ on the marginality of the *Hymn*; to be clear, *Cædmon’s Hymn* appears on the very last page of the Moore manuscript of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica* (Cambridge, University Library Kk. 5. 16, fol. 128v); it appears in the bottom margin of fol. 107r of the so-called Leningrad manuscript (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Q. v. i. 18).
- 2 Note, however, that we might alternatively suggest that the decision to include the Old English text of the *Hymn* in the margins may reflect exactly the opposite: the urge to present the Old English text may have been motivated by the degree to which *Cædmon* was presented as an author, and (as such) in need of a text to be author of.
- 3 See the now-classic discussion by Fred C. Robinson, ‘Old English Literature in Its Most Immediate Context.’
- 4 Although Roman inscriptional *tituli* were collected and disseminated in manuscript *syllogae* as early as the seventh century (discussed by Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, and more recently by Lapidge, ‘The Career of Aldhelm’), there is no evidence of similar vernacular manuscript collections ever having been made.
- 5 For the full Overchurch text, see below, [page 53](#).
- 6 For the exceptional nature of the Overchurch commissioner, however, see below, [page 55](#).
- 7 As discussed above in the introduction, recent critical perspectives that ask us to focus not on a presumably remote original but rather on the proximate production of a poem in (or from) an existing manuscript obviously imagine a different configuration for how dates and chronology figure into our reading and meaning-making processes.
- 8 The *locus classicus* for such anxieties, of course, is the debate surrounding the date of *Beowulf*’s original composition; see Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*, the essays collected in Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf*, Howe, ‘The Uses of Uncertainty,’ and Liuzza, ‘On the Dating of *Beowulf*.’
- 9 Poems attested in four manuscripts: *The Battle of Brunanburh* (73 lines), *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* (13 lines), and *The*

Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care (16 lines); poems attested in three manuscripts: *The Coronation of Edgar* (20 lines) and *The Death of Edgar* (37 lines); poems attested in two manuscripts (or sources): *The Death of Alfred* (21 lines), *The Death of Edward* (34 lines), *Solomon and Saturn* 30a-93b (64 lines), *Durham* (21 lines), *The Gloria I* (57 lines), *The Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care* (30 lines), *A Prayer* (15 lines), and *Latin-English Proverbs* (3 lines).

- 10 The Eadwine Psalter is Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 17. 1; for an edition of the Eadwine verses, see Baker, 'A Little-Known Variant Text.' See also O'Neill, 'Another Fragment,' for four additional lines from *The Metrical Psalms* that appear in the Eadwine Psalter.
- 11 See Bredehoft, 'OE *yðhengest*.'
- 12 Multiple copies of ælfrician rhythmical or verse texts are very frequent, as summarized in Ker, *Catalogue*, 511-15 (for the *Catholic Homilies*); Pope, *Homilies of ælfric* I, 92-3 (for various pieces); and Hill, 'The Dissemination' (for *Lives of Saints*).
- 13 See Bredehoft, 'ælfric and Late Old English Verse,' 106-7.
- 14 For possible Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the *Chronicle* as Alfredian, see my discussion in *Textual Histories* 6-7. Even if the *Chronicle* was not explicitly understood as Alfredian, it seems clear that it was itself granted a degree of cultural or intellectual prominence during the Anglo-Saxon period, one more indication that authority itself was separable from explicitly named authorship. See also [chapter 3](#), below.
- 15 Alfred's preface is probably most easily accessible in the edition of Mitchell and Robinson's *Guide*. ælfric's various prefaces have, of course, been usefully brought together in Wilcox's edition, *ælfric's Prefaces*.
- 16 Joyce Hill has suggested that in his prefaces 'ælfric was not concerned with textual accuracy, textual integrity and authorial identity as such, in what one might call a "modern" sense, but with accuracy, integrity, and authority as agents and guarantors of theological reliability' ('Changing Text' 180). I would say, rather, that his position as author (in terms of his anticipated publication of his works) makes it impossible for ælfric to disengage his anxieties over theological reliability

from the problem of textual integrity: his association of error with inexact scribal activity exactly parallels the operation of the author function in relation to the possible ‘manifest corruption’ of a scribally produced copy as discussed in the introduction, above.

- 17 For clarity’s sake, it is important to note that Cynewulf does (at least in *Fates*, and probably also in *Elene*), explicitly link his name to the act of composition. In *Fates*, for example, the signature passage is introduced by ‘Her mæg findan ... hwa þas fitte fegde’ (Here one may find ... who made this song; *Fates* 96a-8a). My point is that the naming of a composer or poet in these cases does not serve the same purposes as Bede’s, Alfred’s, and ælfric’s self-naming, where their literary, scholarly, or political authority is thereby associated with the works. As Daniel Donoghue writes, ‘It is we postmedieval readers who call Cynewulf’s petition an authorial signature; for him it was simply a pious request for prayers’ (*Style* 116).
- 18 The reference is, of course, to Alfred’s prose preface to the *Pastoral Care*. It may be worth noting in this context that, while the Junius collection and the Nowell codex do feature some illustration, Old English poetic works are usually not especially closely associated with deluxe manuscripts.
- 19 In later chapters I will attempt to identify additional examples that work like the Wulfstan/*Andreas* example, where poets appear to derive specific phrases from earlier works, though still not in the form (or with the effect) of recognizable, literary reference.
- 20 I will suggest other reasons why ælfric might have made this choice in [chapter 4](#).
- 21 Ten inscriptional poems are included in the photographic anthology of Robinson and Stanley, *Old English Verse Texts from Many Sources*: those from the Ruthwell and Brussels crosses, the Franks casket, the Sutton brooch, the Lancashire ring, and stones from Dewsbury, Falstone, Thornhill, Great Urswick, and Overchurch. Excluded by Robinson and Stanley (for various reasons) are Thornhill (runic) I and II, Thornhill (roman), Bridekirk, Carlisle, Wycliffe, and Lanteglos.
- 22 Page gives the date for Thornhill III as ‘ninth century’

(*Introduction* 141). Elliott suggests that the language of the Thornhill stones 'points to Northumbria at the end of the eighth century or in the first half of the ninth' (115). Thornhill is in West Yorkshire. Throughout, I will adapt and relineate the transcriptions of Page and Okasha in order to highlight these texts' verse form. Such rearrangement is, in various respects, unsatisfactory, and Page's and Okasha's works should be consulted by readers who wish to have access to the current state of the texts' preservation. In brief, spaced lower-case characters are used to transcribe English runes, upper case letters correspond to inscribed roman characters. The inscriptional poems, largely ignored in the ASPR, are much in need of a critical edition, but this does not seem to be the place for a full edition.

- 23 Page somewhat hesitantly dates both Thornhill (runic) I and II to the ninth century (*Introduction* 141).
- 24 Okasha's date for Thornhill (roman) is 'possibly eighth to ninth century' (*Hand-List* 118).
- 25 Curiously, Okasha's description makes no mention of the additional fragmentary letters, although they are easily seen in the photograph and their reconstruction as 'BER' is at least plausible.
- 26 Okasha's date for Dewsbury I is 'eighth to ninth century' (*Hand-List* 65).
- 27 Page, *Introduction* 141 cites a date for this stone in 'the ninth century' from the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* 2.
- 28 Falstone is Okasha no. 39; Okasha dates it to 'eighth to ninth century' (*Hand-List* 72); Page gives 'perhaps the ninth century' as the date (*Introduction* 142).
- 29 Elliott suggests that the Overchurch stone may be 'fairly late' (59), although Robinson and Stanley cite only Elliott's earlier (rather vague) dating of the stone as from the eighth or ninth century. Previous readings of the Overchurch stone have treated 'folc' as the first word, presumably identifying the preceding vertical line as a mere bounding line, while my reading here sees it as the 'i' rune. The stone was clearly worked again after the inscription was in place, however, and reconstructing 'bifolcæ' both allows double alliteration in the a-

line and accounts for the otherwise troublesome vowel at the end of the first word.

30 Carlisle I is Okasha no. 23.

31 Wycliffe is Okasha no. 144.

32 Yarm (Okasha no. 145) reads ‘-[M]BEREHC | T + SAC [probably for *sacerd*:‘priest’] + ALLA + SIGN | UMAEFTER | HIS BRE/ODERA | [S]SETAE +’ (adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List* 130). Page, describing the Bewcastle inscription as ‘a memorial inscription’ identifies the following sequences of runes: ‘s e t t o n’ ‘þ i s s i g b [.] c [.]’, and ‘g e b i d [.]’, sequences that show obvious affinities with the inscriptions discussed here (Page, *Introduction* 145).

33 See my forthcoming essay on multiliteral inscriptions. More generally, see Okasha, ‘Commissioners, Makers, and Owners.’

34 It is worth noting that various North Germanic runic poetic memorial stones appear similar to the English examples, especially in the use of ‘after’ as the preposition introducing the person memorialized (for a brief and general discussion of several examples, see Page, *Runes* 43-52).

35 Although not focused exclusively on verse inscriptions, see Bredehoft, ‘First-Person Inscriptions’ for a discussion of the role of textual communities in relation to Anglo-Saxon inscriptions.

36 See Page, *Runes* 28-9. The date of ca. 400 derives from Russom, *Beowulf and Old Germanic Metre* 1; for further details see Russom’s citations on the date.

37 The Lancashire ring is Okasha no. 66; Page, in the second edition of his *Introduction to English Runes*, called it the Manchester ring, but he has since reconsidered the name. See Page, ‘The Provenance of the Lancashire Ring.’

38 The Brussels cross is Okasha no. 17.

39 The Lanteglos stone in Okasha no. 69; her date is ‘probably eleventh century or post-Conquest’ (*Hand-List* 91).

40 Page cites an ‘art historians’ twelfth-century date’ for Bridekirk (*Introduction* 208); the unspaced bold-face characters in the transcription represent Scandinavian, rather than Anglo-Saxon, runes.

41 See Foley, ‘How Genres Leak.’

- 42 Oxford Bodleian Auct D. 2. 19 is Ker no. 292 and Gneuss no. 531. For the tenth-century date of Owun's colophon, see Ker, *Catalogue* 352; Gneuss dates the gloss to 's. x²' (*Handlist* 90).
- 43 The use of hypermetric lines (4-5) makes it clear that the poem belongs to the classical Old English tradition, which is possible in the tenth century, especially during the earlier part of that century. For the first two lines it might be possible to offer an alternative lineation:

De min bruche gibidde fore Owun ðe ðas boc glosesde.

That is, we might read this portion as a hypermetric a-line [xxsx/(x)Sx/(xx)Sx] plus a normal b-line. Bliss ('Single Half-lines') notes the ambiguity sometimes caused by potential overlap between hypermetric lines and a full line followed by a half-line with continued alliteration. Bliss's argument suggests that we should lineate as a full line and a 'short line' (as here). Line 3 shows no internal alliteration, but given that it has two proper nouns, it may be allowed; note that 3b is alliteratively linked to line 4. Verse 4a is metrically unusual: one scansion would identify it as having (problematic) trisyllabic anacrusis, but it is probably better (especially given that line 5 is hypermetric) to scan 4a as a hypermetric a-line paired with a normal b-line; scan as sx/Sx/Sx. Single alliteration in a hypermetric a-line is unusual, but not unparalleled; the anomaly may be somewhat compensated for here by the use of cross alliteration (which also appears in line 5). Blockley (82), citing A.S. Cook, gives only the final two lines a verse-like lineation. *Harawuda* has not, apparently, been identified with certainty.

- 44 As Bessinger and Smith's *Concordance* to the ASPR suggests, the closest parallel from the ASPR is probably *Dream* 83a, 'gebiddap him to pyssum beacne'; the formula with 'gebidde/gebiddap fore' does not appear in the ASPR. On the other hand, some verses from Owun's poem do have affinities with verses from the manuscript tradition. The closest parallels are: *MEp* to CCCC 41, 2b, 'pe pas boc ræde,' and 5a, 'pe ðas boc awrat'; *Jud* 89a, 'sigor ond soðne geleafan' (cf. also *Jud* 344b and *Instr* 161b; 'soðne geleafan' is a very frequent formulaic collocation

in Ælfric's alliterative works), and *Instr* 253b, 'and sibbe is ealra selost.' It is probably worth noting that, while the date of *Judith* is far from clear, the *Metrical Epilogue to CCCC 41* and *Instructions for Christians* are tenth century or later, and the affinities that Owun's colophon has with manuscript poems lie with later, rather than earlier works. Here and throughout, citations of individual verses or lines from familiar poems (those from the ASPR plus *Instructions for Christians*) will use the short titles given in Mitchell, Ball, and Cameron, 'Short Titles,' as modified in their 'Addenda.' Additional abbreviations will be indicated where they are first used.

- 45 London, British Library, Additional 40,000 is Ker no. 131 and Gneuss no. 295. Ker dates the inscription to the second half of the eleventh century.
- 46 The *Metrical Prefaces* of Alfred and Wulfsgie will be discussed in the next chapter. Here we need only note that the first-person format of both *Metrical Prefaces*, in which the book itself speaks, also has numerous analogues in the inscriptional tradition (one thinks of the Alfred Jewel's 'AELFRED M/EC H/EHT GEVVYRCAN' – adapted from Okasha, *Hand-List* 49), as well as Owun's colophon to Bodleian Auct D. 2. 19. Note that Earl, 'King Alfred's Talking Poems,' sees the first-person pronouns as representing the voice of the poems, rather than the voice of the book.
- 47 For Drahmal's signature, see Okasha, *Hand-List* 57; alongside 'Drahmal me worhte' we should probably note the scribe Wulfwi's colophon to London, British Library, Cotton Otho C. i, vol. 1: 'wulfwi me wrat' (Ker, *Catalogue* 235). Otho C. i, vol. 1 (Ker no. 181; Gneuss no. 358) is dated by Ker to the beginning of the eleventh century, and so may be roughly contemporary with the Brussels cross, and slightly earlier, perhaps, than Ælfwine's similar colophon in Vitellius E. xviii. Regardless of the date, Wulfwi's brief colophon (which can be scanned as a triply alliterating Type E verse – see Blockley, 'Addenda' 81) closely parallels inscriptional makers' formulas (see also the Lancashire Ring, discussed above). At least occasionally, scribes seem to have seen their role as similar to the role of artisans who signed their works. See also the discussion of the St Petersburg maxim at the beginning of [chapter 3](#), below.

- 48 The names of the commissioners of Lanteglos (Ælselfth and Genereth) are categorized by Okasha as having ‘more than two possible etymologies’ or being ‘of obscure etymology’ (*Hand-List* 155).
- 49 The Sutton brooch is okasha no. 114.
- 50 Indeed, the prose inscriptional tradition also shows valuable evidence for the relationship between women and texts, with okasha listing no fewer than sixteen objects with female names (in *Hand-List* Index V, 152-4; as many as five more objects published in the ‘Supplements’ to the *Hand-List* also include female names: okasha numbers 170, 186, 198, 228, and 232). In runic inscriptions, female names appear on the Bewcastle cross (Page, *Introduction* 145) and on two of the Hartlepool name-stones (Page, *Introduction* 50-1). Inscribed objects, it would appear, might usefully supplement Lees and Overing’s discussions of issues of women’s ‘voice, agency, and literacy’ in the period (*Double Agents* 36).
- 51 In fact, although the data is somewhat hard to assess because the surviving inscriptional corpus is so small, it may be the case that the inscriptional tradition is more thoroughly characterized by a formulaic style than either of the other poetic traditions identified here. The association of pervasive formulaic content with a poetic tradition that was always closely associated with literacy is an important reminder that formulaic structure does not necessarily imply orality.
- 52 One should note, in fact, that Old English verse was apparently used (at least occasionally) in both genres: see the verses cited from a Rochester charter printed by Kitson, and Ælfric’s various alliterative letters (such as the letter to Wulfgeat, in Assmann, letter I).

- 1 'Saxonica' in Asser must mean 'English,' although the term is potentially ambiguous. Asser's terms for peoples generally resolve the ambiguity; æthelwulf is usually 'Occidentalium Saxonum rex' (Stevenson 8); Alfred is 'Angul-Saxonum rex' (1); the old Saxons are 'Antiquorum Saxonum, *quae Saxonice dicitur Eald Seaxum* (52). As this final passage indicates, 'Saxonice' at least sometimes clearly refers to Old English, as explicitly opposed to old Saxon.
- 2 For useful readings of this story in the context of Asser's discussions of Alfred's literacy, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song* 81-4; Lerer chapter 2; Lees and Overing 45-50.
- 3 The copy of *The Pastoral Care* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 20, of course, includes not only the prose preface but also the poetic *Metrical Preface* and *Metrical Epilogue*, which thus survive in contemporary Alfredian copies. Earlier records of manuscript verse include only the eighth-century copies of *Cædmon's Hymn*, *Bede's Death Song*, and *A Proverb from Winfrid's Time*, as discussed in the introduction. The continental manuscript of *The Leiden Riddle* is dated by Parkes, 'Leiden Riddle,' to the tenth century.
- 4 The poetic boundary survey in a charter of 868 (identified as verse by Kitson; preserved uniquely in the cartulary portion of the twelfth-century *Textus Roffensis* in Rochester Cathedral Library) is important as an example of ninth-century verse, though preserved only in a very late copy.
- 5 For *The Heliand* in general, see the edition of Behaghel and Taeger; Cathey's edition provides only selections of the poem, but with an English-language apparatus. The Munich manuscript of *The Heliand* is Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex Germanicus Monacensis (cgm) 25; the Prague fragment is Berlin, Deutsches Historisches Museum R 56/2537; the Straubing fragment is Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cgm 8840. Discussed more fully below, the Cotton manuscript of *The Heliand* is London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. vii (Ker 137; Gneuss 308).
- 6 For the Old Saxon *Genesis* the most convenient edition is Doane, *The Saxon Genesis*, which also includes an edition of *Genesis B*. The Old Saxon text is found in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica,

Palatinus Latina 1447.

- 7 Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, 2° Ms. Theol. 54, fols 1r, 76v; ca. 830-40 ('ins vierte Jahrzehnt des 9. Jahrhunderts'; Broszinski, *Das Hildebrandlied*, n.p.). See Rauch, Plate V (xxiii), for a map of old Saxon speech area.
- 8 The possibility must, of course, remain speculative, but it is not out of the question. Lees and Overing note that 'although Asser's chronology is not always reliable, the book scene with Osburh comes after Alfred's father's marriage to Judith' (49), and Doane, *Saxon Genesis*, suggests that æthelwulf's marriage may have provided the occasion at which a combined *Heliand*/*Genesis* manuscript could have been carried to England (53). Lerer, interested in investigating the historical accuracy and ideological content of Asser's story, notes that 'Asser's vision of the manuscript, at what may be the most empirical level, fails to match what we know of English bookmaking at the time of Alfred's boyhood,' since 'few, if any, vernacular manuscripts of the mid-ninth century would have had such elaborate initials' (66). An old Saxon poetic manuscript presumably would have had such an initial, though: the Cotton manuscript of *The Heliand* (though from the tenth century) begins with a polychrome initial, and (as Raw, 'Probable Derivation,' has suggested) many of the Junius manuscript's illustrations derive from an illustrated old Saxon *Genesis*, clearly suggesting the possibility of a deluxe manuscript. Unfortunately, the opening of the Munich *Heliand* manuscript does not survive. Lerer's comments on 'vernacular bookmaking at the time of Alfred's boyhood' (66) are, one should note, somewhat speculative: Ker's table of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon from before the late tenth century includes none from the middle of the ninth century (Ker, *Catalogue* xv).
- 9 Verses from *The Heliand* will be cited (using the short title '*Hel*') from the edition of Behaghel and Taeger. For examples of how Old English and Old Saxon poetry share some formulas, but do not share others, see Bredehoft, 'Formulaic Rhyme'; Kellogg, 'The South Germanic Oral Tradition'; and Capek, 'Formula Development.'
- 10 That is, the Old Saxon *Genesis* (*OSG*) presumably dates from ca. 850, and the date of *Genesis B* is probably not after ca. 900.

Doane, *Saxon Genesis*, dates the transliteration of the poem to 'about 900' (54); Fulk assents to the view that *Genesis B* is 'widely regarded as a translation of the Alfredian period' (*History* 281).

- 11 See Bredehoft, 'Old Saxon Influence.' Because of their fairly detailed metrical nature, it is impossible to present the arguments from that paper here, but I will take the conclusions arrived at there as my starting point for the succeeding analysis. Note that *Solomon and Saturn* and *The Metrical Preface to Wærferth's Translation of Gregory's Dialogues* have clear 'early West Saxon' orthographic features also seen, for example, in the prose *Pastoral Care* (e.g, *GD*Pref 22a, 'resðe' and 24a, 'selesða'; *MSol* 22a, 'wesðe'; for other early West Saxonisms in *Solomon and Saturn*, see O'Neill, 'Dialogues,' 152-4). Fulk accepts an Alfredian date for *Solomon and Saturn* (*History* 195, n. 46), but, because of their brevity, he does not address the dating of *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Metrical Preface to Gregory's Dialogues*, or *Finnsburh*. See also O'Neill's important arguments for the unity of *Solomon and Saturn* and for the composition of the poem at Alfred's court ('Dialogues').
- 12 This example is from my list of rhyming formulas and their attestations in 'Formulaic Rhyme'; although I express it somewhat differently here, I am employing the same criterion of metrical identity as in that essay (206, n. 6). Because my identification of metrical influence from Old Saxon in 'Old Saxon Influence' depends upon using the scansion system I employed in *Early English Metre* (itself a modified version of that used in Geoffrey Russom's *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory*), it is important to note here that detailed scansions here will also use the system described in *Early English Metre* (and adapted as needed for Old Saxon).
- 13 See below for a brief commentary on how this method relates to that employed recently by Andy Orchard ('Style and Substance' and 'Computing Cynewulf').
- 14 It does appear three times in Ælfric (including once in a 'rhythmical' or poetic work, the *Life of Thomas* (*LS* XXXVI) 326a), and in a homily from Cambridge, University Library, Ii. 4. 6 (Bazire-Cross homily 7, line 190), in a passage directly dependent on Ælfric (DOE online corpus search, 'heardmod-').

- 15 Note that the scansion, Sx/Ssx (for *GenB* 285a) and S/Ssx (for *Hel* 3137a) do differ slightly, although the second foot (Ssx) is sufficient for the definition of formula given above. In the much smaller Old Saxon corpus, phrases repeated within *The Heliand*, or phrases used in both *The Heliand* and the Old Saxon *Genesis*, should be seen as likely to be formulaic.
- 16 The attestations of the ‘monna’/‘modsefa’ collocation can also be confirmed with a DOE online corpus proximity search (‘monna’/‘manna’ and ‘modsef-’). ‘Modsefa’ does not occur in Old English prose.
- 17 To be clear, I call *The Meters* Alfredian not because it seems clear that Alfred wrote them (Godden’s recent comments in ‘Did King Alfred Write Anything?’ powerfully makes the case that he did not) but rather because both their attribution to Alfred and the data presented in this chapter offer a powerful argument that they were written in the Alfredian milieu. Janet Bately’s recent comment also expresses the current state of critical understanding on the question of Alfred’s authorship of *The Meters*: ‘What the most recent investigations into the language of the verse meters seem to me to show is that there is nothing to indicate that Alfred could not have been responsible for the versification, not that there is good evidence to assume that he was’ (‘Alfredian Canon’ 112).
- 18 *Hel* 2317a and 2924a should be interpreted as featuring anacrusis (which may extend to up to four syllables in Old Saxon); thus all three of these *Heliand* verses stand as examples of Type D, with enough consistency of metrical form to support their identification as a formula.
- 19 The phrase ‘daga gehwylce’ does occur a number of times in Old English prose, most prominently in Wærferth’s translation of Gregory’s *Dialogues*, which is itself associated with Alfred’s court (DOE online proximity search ‘daga-’ followed by ‘gehw-’). A somewhat similar-seeming usage (‘daga æghwylce’) appears twice in *The Metrical Psalms* (PPs 77.16 2a and 118.164 3a), but these verses are probably later and to be scanned differently.
- 20 The a-line version of the Old Saxon verse appears to have been ‘alloro daga gehuilikes,’ which is used seven times in *The Heliand* (*Hel* 1218a, 1253a, 1917a, 2169a, 2347a, 3333a, and

3781a). Because it would need to be scanned with anacrusis, this Old Saxon verse would be unmetrical in Old English.

- 21 The DOE online corpus confirms the rarity of the collocation, which does not occur in Old English prose ('wra-' and 'willa-').
- 22 *Heliand* 955a, 1033a, 1078a, 1231a, 2494a, 2663a, 2672a, 2688a, 3456a, 3546a, 3795a, 3816a, 3867a, 3898a, 3956a, 4742a, 5061a, and *OSG* 121a. As should be clear, I will use the short title *OSG* for citations of the Old Saxon *Genesis*, cited from Doane, *Saxon Genesis*.
- 23 Note that *Genesis B* also alliteratively collocates 'bysene' and 'brungen' across the caesura in line 651. The DOE online corpus indicates that the three examples under discussion are the only collocations of 'bringan' and 'bysen' in Old English ('-bring-' / '-brenge-' / '-brung-' / '-broht-' and '-bys-' / '-bis-').
- 24 See Sisam, 'Addendum: The Verses Prefixed to *Gregory's Dialogues*' and the prior studies cited there.
- 25 Note that the *Genesis B* formulas with 'ofermod' presumably reflect formulas used in the Old Saxon *Genesis*, though the word is not preserved in the surviving fragments of that poem. Interestingly, however, *The Heliand* uses these words in different formulas: 'erl oðarmôdig' (*Hel* 775a); 'oðarmôdig man' (*Hel* 2705b; cf. 4169b); 'erlos oðarmuoda' (*Hel* 3992a, 5296a).
- 26 The date of *Vainglory* is not addressed in Fulk's *History*, but like all works in classical Old English metre, it at least has the potential to predate Alfred's time; of course, if it is Alfredian or later, no explanation for the appearance of 'ofermedum' is needed. That 'oferhygd' was indeed the more traditional Old English term seems to be attested by its twenty-six appearances in poems like *Genesis A* (2x); *Genesis B* (1x); *Daniel* (6x); *Christ and Satan* (5x); *Guthlac A* (3x); *Juliana* (1x); *Beowulf* (2x), *Vainglory* (4x), *Azarias* (1x) and *Resignation* (1x). 'Oferhygd' is also the more common form in *The Metrical Psalms* (17x). For the concept of formulaic reading, in which scribal substitution of lexically and contextually appropriate alternatives is understood as happening via a process analogous to oral-formulaic composition, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, especially 60-7.

- 27 Note that *The Heliand* (unlike *Genesis B*) does not appear to use Old Saxon ‘unmet’ in Type A.
- 28 The inflected forms appear only in *Beowulf* in other verse types (see discussion below); the four-syllable inflected forms like ‘ungemete’ would have been unmetrical (or at least problematic) in classical Type A verses, because Sxxx and Sxxs feet are unmetrical in classical Old English metre. In late Old English verse, the type became regular (and much-used) in *The Metrical Psalms*. The use of four-syllable examples in Type A in *The Rune Poem* 8b and 29b presumably suggests a post-Alfredian date for either the poem or for these particular spellings. Fulk summarizes debate on the date of *The Rune Poem*, suggesting ‘there is no reason to reject the possibility of composition in the tenth century’ (277).
- 29 A few further parallels might be noted. The closest parallel to *Met1* 81b, ‘fela worda spræc’ appears to be *GenB* 271b, ‘feala worda gespæc.’ Likewise, ‘orsorh’ does not appear to have been used in Old English verse before its appearance in *GenB* 804a, appearing in *Met5* 33b; *Met7* 40a, 43b; *Met13* 71a; and *Instr* 34a. Both of these examples, however, may simply be Alfredianisms, rather than Old Saxonisms.
- 30 On Wulfsgie’s dates, see Keynes and Lapidge 187; Wulfsgie does not have an entry in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*.
- 31 For example, Dobbie, in the ASPR, suggests, ‘Metrical criteria suggest a fairly late date’ (ASPR VI, xviii), drawing comparisons to *Maldon* in particular, though hedging his bets by claiming that the heroic subject matter would suit the eighth century. The fourth edition of *Klaeber’s Beowulf* says, ‘Estimates of the age of the fragment range widely’ (Fulk, Bjork, and Niles 280, n. 2).
- 32 Michael Swanton, in his edition of *The Dream of the Rood*, maintains the conventional view that the Ruthwell Dream text dates from the time of the monument itself, ‘the late seventh or early eighth century’ (9); a similar perspective is argued by Éamonn – Carragáin (47-53). Paul Meyvaert and Page (*Introduction* 147) have suggested on the basis of the runes’ orientation that the runic poetic inscription may have been added to the cross at a later date, though Meyvaert still argues for an eighth-century date for the text (165); E.G. Stanley has

suggested that from the linguistic perspective the poetic inscription best matches a tenth-century context ('Ruthwell Cross Inscription'); Patrick Conner points out that the unusual and highly developed linguistic precision of the Ruthwell 'g' and 'k' runes may well relate closely to tenth-century manuscript collections of runes ('Ruthwell Monument' 39-42). If the cross poem dates to the tenth century, as these recent studies suggest, an Alfredian date for *The Dream of the Rood* is perfectly reasonable, and supported by the presence of old Saxonisms in the poem.

- 33 See, however, my summary of evidence that some passages from *The Dream of the Rood* may show direct knowledge of *The Heliand* in 'Old Saxon Influence.'
- 34 Note that Fulk finds no evidence for non-parasited forms in *The Meters of Boethius*, supporting the scansion here of 'wuldor' as Sx, rather than S (82). Forms with 'wuldor' are common in Old English, appearing roughly 450 times in the ASPR, as a quick glance at the Bessinger-Smith *Concordance* suggests (1474-8); the surviving old Saxon corpus is about one-fifth as large. The hypothetical old Saxon cognate certainly does not appear ninety times, as the proportion might suggest; indeed its complete absence from *The Heliand* or the old Saxon *Genesis* must suggest it was not current as a word at all.
- 35 Lord's account of oral singers acknowledges that written texts may sometimes lie 'in the background' (23) of the repertoire of oral singers, though Lord would certainly emphasize that the composition of *The Meters of Boethius*, if oral, would presumably involve a singer who listened to the prose summaries, composed appropriate songs, and then went through the laborious process of dictation, giving our texts as mediated by prior oral performance, even if private. For the hazards of such dictation, see Lord, chapter 6.
- 36 Compare *Met1* 62a, 'anwald ofer hi'; an Old Saxon example of Sxxx/S is *Hel* 1707a, 'hard trio endi heDig.' Although relatively few in number, some verses from *The Meters* do seem to exhibit metrical Old Saxonisms, including three or more syllables before an initial finite verb (*Met10* 35a; 67b; *Met30* 18a); three medial unstressed syllables in Type B (xx/ Sxxxs: *Met20* 19a, 148a); Type DS (Sxsx/S: *Met21* 22a, *Met27* 18a). Although

these examples would be too few to prove Old Saxon influence on their own, they do support the formulaic evidence presented above that Old Saxon poetry does serve as a source or context for *The Meters*.

- 37 Compare *Met11* 15b; *Met20* 18b; none of these examples is taken over directly from the prose, so they must stand as metrically significant.
- 38 See Calvin Kendall's discussion of class I compounds (159-74).
- 39 A third example of this formula appears in *Met10* 57a, 'wæron on worulde.'
- 40 It is probably important to note that, once again, the verses in question do not appear to belong to a pre-existing Old English formula. Interestingly, they may derive from an old Saxon formula: compare *GenB* 504a, 'ne wurde on worulde,' and 551a, 'wurde on worulde.' These verses from *Genesis B* (using 'weorpan' rather than 'wesan') are also not paralleled elsewhere in pre-Alfredian Old English verse; compare, however, *Met17* 30a, 'wyrð on weorulde.'
- 41 In 'Old Saxon Influence,' I raise the possibility of direct translation without attempting a firm conclusion; my comments here should be taken as superseding my earlier position.
- 42 Indeed, the glossary to *Genesis B* in Doane's *Saxon Genesis* makes note of some fifty words in *Genesis B* that are not otherwise recorded in Old Saxon, though a number are likely to have been current (on the basis of place-name evidence or because they are typical poetic compounds). Regardless, even *Genesis B* seems to have some vocabulary that is strictly Old English, not Old Saxon.
- 43 Previous attempts to explain the solution of this particular riddle do not seem especially effective. Dobbie's ASPR notes say only, 'This description of a book ... is taken by Vicenti, p. 69, to refer to the book with seven seals in Revelation v. 1, each of the XX *orda*, l. 232, being a page or leaf of the volume' (ASPR VI, 165). John Miles Foley has recently expressed some reservations: '[The book] has (perhaps) the seven seals of Revelation' ('How Genres Leak' 96-7); why a seal should be called a tongue is not clear. Kathryn Powell has recently suggested, 'Books cannot literally speak, but nonetheless have

“tongues” – an image particularly suggestive of book leaves in this context – which bear wisdom and “signs” of truth in the form of words’ (121).

- 44 Though it is somewhat difficult to be certain how to count the letters of the old Saxon alphabet, it seems clear that old Saxon lacks the vowels ‘æ’ and ‘y,’ indicating that the solution proposed here for Saturn’s riddle cannot relate to old Saxon.
- 45 Russom similarly scans the type as Sxx/Ss (*Linguistic Theory* 121). The type in general, of course, is rare in the b-line, because the Ss foot is usually filled by a compound marked for alliteration. But because the Ss foot in these *Beowulf* verses is not filled by a compound, they do not require double alliteration, and thus they may occur in the b-line.
- 46 DOE online corpus search: ‘unigmet-.’ The orthographical argument, I suspect, is weaker than the metrical one, as orthography is even more subject to alteration through copying. But the very rarity of this particular spelling does suggest the possibility of direct influence.
- 47 Here I will leave out of consideration potentially parallel verses from later poems including *The Metrical Psalms*, the *Chronicle* poems, *The Judgment Day II*, *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, *The Menologium*, *Maldon*, and *Seasons for Fasting*, as all of these poems are certainly or almost certainly later than Alfred’s reign, and they are thus unlikely to offer useful parallels that may have been known to a poet composing in Alfred’s court. Rather than standing as evidence of widespread and current oral formulas, parallels from demonstrably later poems are themselves potential evidence of direct borrowing. See chapter 3.
- 48 DOE online corpus search: ‘weala-.’
- 49 DOE online corpus searches: ‘lidm-,’ ‘liðm-,’ ‘lidsm-,’ and ‘liðsm-.’
- 50 DOE online corpus searches: ‘sciphe-,’ ‘iuman-,’ ‘iumon-,’ ‘gioman-,’ and ‘giomon-.’
- 51 Indeed, ‘fæstræd’ appears in the ASPR only in these two lines and in two later poems, *PPs* 134.3 2a and *Men* 135a (where it is alliteratively linked with ‘folca lareow’: *Men* 135b), although it has a notable presence in Alfredian prose. It is possible that

‘fæstræd’ (and other compounds used in Alfredian prose) may have originally stemmed from contemporary knowledge of Old English verse. Note also that while ‘hordgestreon’ also appears in *Jul* 22a and *And* 1114a, only in *Beowulf* and *The Meters* is the word alliteratively linked to ‘hider.’ DOE online corpus searches: ‘hordgestr-’ and ‘fæstræd-.’

- 52 Andy Orchard (personal communication) calls my attention to the work of Alison Powell, ‘Verbal Parallels in *Andreas* and Its Relationship to *Beowulf* and *Cynewulf*’ (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2002; also cited by Orchard, ‘Style and Substance’ 304, n. 40), which I have unfortunately not yet seen. Orchard suggests that Powell lists ‘149 uniquely shared parallels between *Andreas* and *Cynewulf*.’
- 53 Compare, however, the eleven unique parallels Orchard identifies linking *Judith* and *Elene* (‘Computing *Cynewulf*’ 81).
- 54 See Doane’s hypothetical reconstruction of the events surrounding the translation of *Genesis B*: ‘Around 900, when the ancestor of *Genesis A* was being copied, it having been found that the exemplar lacked the story of the Fall of Man ... those parts were extracted, transliterated into early W[est]-S[axon] and interpolated into *Genesis A*’ (*Saxon Genesis* 54).
- 55 See the comments of R.D. Fulk, who concludes that ‘*Cynewulf* ... cannot have written after about 850’ (389-90); ‘a probable *terminus ad quem* of ca. 825’ applies to *Exodus* (392); and, for *Andreas*, ‘the most debatable issues’ in Fulk’s use of a hypothetical chronological scheme include ‘whether *Andreas* should be positioned before or after the signed works of *Cynewulf*’ (64), although dated in the ninth century, in either case. As noted above, Orchard’s study of probable borrowing suggests the following relative chronology: *Beowulf* precedes *Fates of the Apostles*, which precedes *Andreas* (‘Style and Substance’ 293-4).
- 56 The relatively uncommon ‘eallra’ spelling, interestingly, is relatively restricted within the ASPR, appearing thirteen times in Vercelli poems and ten times in *The Meters of Boethius*; by contrast, the generally more common spelling ‘ealra’ appears only five times in Vercelli poems (but ten times in *The Meters*).
- 57 Alfred’s adult impulse to collect is, in fact, well recorded, in

both Asser's story of Alfred's *enchiridion* (chs. 88-9) and in the extended metaphor of the forest of wisdom found in the preface to Alfred's translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies* (translated by Keynes and Lapidge, 138-9). For books potentially imported to England by King Alfred's continental scholars, see Keynes and Lapidge 214 n. 26.

58 See Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*.

- 1 St Petersburg, Russian National Library O. v. XVI. 1 is Ker no. 415 and Gneuss no. 844.
- 2 Ker dates the manuscript to the first quarter of the tenth century ('Supplement' 127). The poetic lineation of this passage follows that of Blockley ('Addenda and Corrigenda'). I should note that it is possible that the composition of the St Petersburg maxim predates its manuscript context.
- 3 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C. 697 is Ker no. 349 and Gneuss no. 661.
- 4 The Royal Psalter is London, British Library, Royal 2 B. v; it is Ker no. 249 and Gneuss no. 451.
- 5 See my comments on the probable date of *The Metrical Psalms* in 'Ælfric and Late Old English Verse' 106. Sisam and Sisam conclude, 'Perhaps a date round about the middle of the tenth century best fits' the date of the *Psalms*' composition (17).
- 6 The book in question is London, British Library, Royal 12 D. xvii (Ker no. 264; Gneuss no. 479); the Parker Chronicle is the first part of Cambridge, Corpus Christ College 173 (fols 1-56; Ker no. 39 and Gneuss no. 52).
- 7 The Vercelli Book is Ker no. 394 and Gneuss no. 941; *An Exhortation to Christian Living* is uniquely preserved in the earlier portion of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201, from the beginning of the eleventh century (Ker no. 49; Gneuss no. 65). I refer to *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, rather than to *The Rewards of Piety*, simply to follow the ASPR titles, rather than through a conviction that *Exhortation* and *A Summons to Prayer* are truly separate compositions. See Bredehoft, 'A Note on Robinson's *Rewards*,' however, for the suggestion that at least one Anglo-Saxon may have read them as separate works.
- 8 For other detailed discussions of this manuscript, see also Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems,' and Keynes, 'King Athelstan's Books.'
- 9 DOE online corpus proximity search, 'sym-' and 'æghwær-'. Note that the manuscript reading of *PPs* 88.14.5b is 'symbol æghær.' These two words are used as a verse elsewhere in the *Psalms* in the reverse order: *PPs* 102.12.4b, 'æghwær symbol' (though lacking the 'w' in the manuscript; *PPs* 129.8.2b,

‘æghwær symble’ (though lacking the ‘r’ in the manuscript; and *PsFr* 50.10.3b, ‘æghwær symle.’ See below for comments on the possible sequencing of *Riddle 40* and *The Metrical Psalms*.

- 10 That is, when an analysis of formulas or parallels has been undertaken, all verbal parallels are often considered to be significant, regardless of the fact that some poems can, indeed, be dated or localized.
- 11 See the brief biography of Dunstan in Lapidge et al., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, 146-7; presumably the time span that is relevant here would be before Dunstan’s exile in 956, so we might best hypothesize the composition of *Riddle 40* as occurring between 940 and 956.
- 12 See Gretsches summative comment suggesting that ‘work on the Brussels glosses must have continued for some decades after its presumed beginning in Glastonbury in the 940s’ (*Intellectual Foundations* 381).
- 13 Sisam and Sisam (15) indicate that *The Menologium* ‘quotes three lines’ from the verse translation of the *Psalms* in lines 60-2 (15); Dobbie is somewhat more cautious, saying only that ‘the corresponding passage, Psalm 111, 22, in the Paris Psalter is similar ... and the quotation here [in *The Menologium*] is perhaps derived from it’ (ASPR VI, 171).
- 14 As noted by Fulk: ‘The *Menologium* does not mix palatal and velar g for the purpose of alliteration’ (261). Five lines in just the first two pages of the ASPR’s edition of *The Metrical Psalms* indicate how regularly the two sounds alliterate with one another in that work (PPs 52.3 4, 52.4 3, 52.5 4, 53.2 1, 53.6 3). Co-alliteration of the two sounds is traditional and conservative; treating the two sounds as separate alliterators is innovative.
- 15 This scholion appears adjacent to Psalm 17 verse 51 in the Royal Psalter, London, British Library Royal 2 B. v, which is Ker no. 249 and Gneuss no. 451. See also Blockley, ‘Addenda and Corrigenda’ 82 for a brief bibliography. Gretsches argument regarding the significance of the Royal Psalter’s translation of ‘christus’ as ‘cyning’ leads her to conclude that the ‘striking similarity with regard to their underlying basic idea between the Latin couplet [in the Benedictional of Æthelwold]

(probably by Æthelwold) and the Old English verses in the Royal Psalter may of course strengthen the case for Æthelwold's authorship, not only of the English verses, but of the Royal gloss as a whole' (*Intellectual Foundations* 310). See also *Intellectual Foundations* 129-30.

- 16 See Gretsches: 'The link between the Royal Psalter and the Metrical Psalter provided by *cocerpanne* can scarcely be coincidental; and again the (presumably) earlier date for the Royal gloss would seem to establish that the poet of the Metrical Psalter drew on the gloss and not *vice versa*' (*Intellectual Foundations* 81).
- 17 Note also that the alliteration of 'Iudeum' and 'geardagum' shows co-alliteration of two palatal 'g's; although a single occurrence is not sufficient to establish the poet's practice, it may be indicative.
- 18 DOE online corpus proximity search, 'geardag-' and 'nem-.'
- 19 The palaeographic arguments for localizing the production of Royal 2 B. v are complex, though usefully summarized by Gretsches: Dumville argues against a Winchester origin, but as Gretsches suggests, he 'sees no difficulty in assigning Royal 2 B. v ... either to Glastonbury or Abingdon' (*Intellectual Foundations* 266). See Dumville, 'Mid-Century Phases' 149-50 and *English Caroline Script* 14 note 33.
- 20 *The Death of Edgar II* is the poem recorded in annal 975DE of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Although excluded from the ASPR, *The Death of Edgar II* is included in Robinson and Stanley's facsimile anthology. A tenth-century date for *An Exhortation* is made virtually certain by its reuse in Vercelli homily XXI, given the date of the Vercelli manuscript in the second half of the tenth century.
- 21 Compare, however, *Prec* 3b, 'pæt he wel punge.'
- 22 The dating of *Judith*, as with most classical poems, is a matter of some difficulty. Mark Griffith surveys the evidence and suggests a date in the 'late ninth or tenth century' (*Judith* 47), which certainly would make it possible that *Judith* was known to the *Brunanburh* poet. Griffith's separate discussion of the 'beasts of battle' scenes does not make any specific observation about the closeness of the passages in *Judith* and *Brunanburh*.

- 23 Townend also suggests that the poems were not written for the *Chronicle*, but ‘enjoyed an anterior (and possibly subsequent) circulation’ (35), though I have suggested that the *Chronicle* must always have been the intended context for even *Brunanburh* (*Textual Histories* 100-2).
- 24 See Samantha Zacher’s forthcoming ‘Multilingualism at the Court of King æthelstan.’ Both Townend and Zacher also reference Niles’s ‘Skaldic Technique in *Brunanburh*’ for the possibility of more or less direct Norse influence.
- 25 The criterion of ‘g’ alliteration is, in fact, a surprisingly significant one, as a number of poems from the late Old English verse tradition (besides *The Metrical Psalms*) allow the two ‘g’s to co-alliterate, including *The Lord’s Prayer II*, *The Lord’s Prayer III*, the *Kentish Psalm 50*, and *Instructions for Christians*. Distinguishing between the two ‘g’s as alliterators was not widespread, even in the late Old English poetic tradition. Note that the evidence of *Judith* on this matter is ambiguous (Griffith, *Judith* 45). On the co-alliteration of palatal and velar ‘g,’ see also Amos 100-2.
- 26 Examples of Sx/(x)Sx with double alliteration include: *Men* 1a, 4a, 24a, 35a, 40a, 54a, 66a, 74a, 90a, 98a, 120a, 122a, 127a, 143a, 153a, 157a, 180a, 294a, 205a, 228a; the lone example with single alliteration is 191a, ‘Simon and Iudas.’ Verses with proper names are often categorically excluded from double alliteration requirements (see my *Early English Metre* 31), so the requirement for double alliteration in this type is clearly a firm one in this poem.
- 27 Excluding verses with proper names (see preceding note), examples of Ssx/S with double alliteration include *Men* 50a, 102a, 171a, 210a; examples of Ssx/S with single alliteration include *Men* 89a, 99a, 118a, 121a, 175a, 177a, 179a. Since the examples with single alliteration outnumber those with double alliteration, it is clear that there is no requirement for double alliteration in this poem in this type.
- 28 Bliss, unaware of or unconcerned with the overlap of these two *Brunanburh* verses with *Andreas* verses, does use them to suggest that palatal and velar ‘g’ do alliterate in *Brunanburh* (*Metre* 100); my argument, of course, is that these verses are anomalous in *Brunanburh* and that the anomaly is quite

precisely accounted for by the relationship of these verses with *Andreas*.

- 29 For a fuller account of the metricality of various verses in the *Chronicle* poems, see Townsend, 'Metre,' although my approach differs from Townsend's on some details.
- 30 Compare Dobbie on the dating of *The Menologium*: 'the latter half of the tenth century, or more definitely the years 965-1000' (ASPR, VI, lxxv).
- 31 Notably, the B record of the Edgar poems (probably copied ca. 978) has a good claim to be the earliest record of them. Although the B *Chronicle* does not include *The Menologium*, the close textual relationship between the B and C *Chronicles* does nothing to disprove the possibility that an ancestor of C was prefaced by *The Menologium* as early as the 970s.
- 32 The alliterative linkage is apparently later picked up by Ælfric, *Nativitas Domini* (Pope I), 55, 'Augustinus se wisa 7 se wordsnotera bisceop' (Augustine, the wise and word-wise bisho), and 'wordsnotera' is picked up (from there?) in manuscript D of the *Chronicle*, in annal 1047: 'her forðferde Lyfing se wordsnotera biscop' (Cubbin 67; Here Lyfing, the word-wise bishop, passed forth). Outside of glosses apparently descending from the 'Aldhelm seminar' the word is used nowhere else in Old English (DOE online corpus search: 'wordsn-.' See chapter 5 below for other Ælfrician resonances in the eleventh-century annals of the *Chronicle*).
- 33 Note that the Beowulfian resonances in the Aldhelm glosses discussed by Gretsch (and those in the Royal scholion) may help sort out some of the layers of Aldhelm glossing: if the evidence of *Riddle 40* suggests that only Exeter Book poems (and possibly *The Meters of Boethius*) were available in Dunstan's Glastonbury, æthelwold's study of Aldhelm presumably continued after he gained access to the broader range of poems used as sources in the *Chronicle* poems and *The Menologium*.
- 34 As Gretsch suggests, 'The confidence which [æthelwold] and his co-workers placed in the intellectual potential, the pliability and the resourcefulness of the English language is revealed in the many coinages among the Brussels glosses trying to

recreate the ingenuity and flamboyance of Aldhelm's vocabulary' (*Intellectual Foundations* 381).

- 35 The use of quotations from *The Metrical Psalms* in The Benedictine Office, though apparently dating from the early eleventh century, attests to this likelihood and emphasizes the degree to which the translation was culturally sanctioned as authoritative, in the sense of being possessed of a high degree of cultural prominence.
- 36 For context, one might note that nearly all of the manuscripts of Aldhelm's prose *De uirginitate* in Gneuss's *Handlist* (the very text so highly valued in Reform circles) are dated from 'x med.' to 'xi in.' (Gneuss nos. 93, 458, 464, 473, 509, 549, 613, 707, 806); the copying of the so called four poetic manuscripts fits the Aldhelmian context of the Benedictine Reform with remarkable precision.
- 37 DOE online corpus search: 'gemæld-.'
- 38 The usage in question is clearly a formula in Old Saxon, appearing not only in *Genesis B*, but also in *Hel* 254a, 'Ioseph gimahlit,' and 3993a, 'Thuomas gimalda,' as well as in a handful of examples (*Hel* 139a, 914a, and 3136b) where 'tho' appears between the name and the verb. See also *Das Hildebrandlied* 7a, 14a, 26a, and 45a.
- 39 For a metrical account of late Old English verse, see my *Early English Metre* 70-98; the key change involves the loss of resolution, which had the effect of allowing additional unstressed syllables after the stresses in metrical feet. My analysis of Old Saxon metre (forthcoming, 'Old Saxon Influence') argues that Old Saxon desyncopation had a generally similar effect in that language, also adding additional unstressed syllables after the stresses in metrical feet. So, while my analysis suggests two different motivations for the metrical differences between classical Old English and these two other traditions, there is a similarity of effect that at least opens the door to the possibility that Old Saxon verses may have motivated the shift to late Old English verse. To offer a concrete example, an Old English verse like *MSol* 232a: hafað tungena gehwylc s/Sxxxs which was unmetrical in Old English but very probably metrically modelled on Old Saxon verses like *Hel* 2592b: Than is allaro accaro gehulic xx/(xxx)Sxxxs *Hel*

1594b: Do thina iungoron so self s/(xx)Sxxxx might have had the potential to cause the reanalysis of resolved Old English verses like *Beo* 362a: ofer geofenes begang xx/Sxxx to result in a newly understood scansion such as *Beo* 362a: ofer geofenes begang xx/SxxxxS. Once such a reanalysis had taken place, new verses like *PPs* 69.6 2a: gefultuma me, god x/SxxxxS would naturally start to be produced. In short, once a poem like *Solomon and Saturn* (or, even more likely, *Genesis B*) was published, its forms (once unacceptable in Old English verse) might potentially have spurred a new understanding of metre, including the ultimate abandonment of resolution as a poetic principle. The question of whether these changes involved an oral or literate process is very much worth asking, as is the question of whether the loss of resolution was related to Old Saxon changes in the first place; this note, however, is intended only to suggest the potential relevance of Old Saxon verse types for tenth-century developments in Old English, without indicating any certainty about the possibility.

- 40 Note that the *Maldon* poet uses ‘þe’ for the older ‘by’ in the comparison in 146b (as well as those in 312a-13a). The change is presumably not merely orthographic, but reflects the loss of the instrumental case, suggesting that the insertion of the articles could, in fact, also be related to grammatical changes.
- 41 Scragg’s 1981 edition of the poem, for example, appears to never raise the possibility that *Maldon* borrows rare verses or words directly, referring rather to ‘inherited poetic diction’ (*Maldon* 32).
- 42 Richard Dance’s recent essay “‘IÜær wearð hream ahafen” catalogues the *Maldon* poet’s remarkable and extensive use of soundplay and wordplay in the poem.
- 43 DOE online corpus searches: ‘hafenod-’/‘hafenad-’; ‘sælid-’; ‘franca-’; ‘lidm-’; ‘wigpl-’; note that ‘liðmonna’ is also used in *Met*26 63b. See further the discussion of ‘franca’ in chapter 4 below.
- 44 We might also note that *Maldon* uses ‘hyse’ as a term for ‘young man’ no less than seven times (2a, 112b, 123a, 128a, 141a, 152b, 169b); in the rest of the ASPR it appears only sixteen more times, in *Daniel* (7x), *Andreas* (3x), *Elene* (1x); *Riddle* 54 (1x); *Beowulf* (1x), *The Metrical Psalms* (2x), and *Finnsburh* (1x).

Although the number of poems where this poetic word is used turns out to be fairly large, the frequency with which it is used in *Maldon* is notable. Although his conclusions differ somewhat from mine, Scragg has also noted that ‘there is considerable repetition in the poem’ (*Maldon* 31) and that ‘the repetition coupled with the relatively narrow range of metrical types in the poem suggests some limitation of the poet’s art’ (*Maldon* 32).

- 45 Indeed, the *Maldon* poet’s search for rare or unusual words may have gone so far as to prompt him or her to include words only poorly understood; cf. Scragg’s comment that ‘two hapax legomena, *færsceaðan* and *hringlocan*, may have been coined without a clear understanding of the meaning of their constituents’ (*Maldon* 54, note 159).
- 46 The use of repeated phrases that might otherwise seem formulaic can be seen not only in ‘[proper name] + *gemælde*,’ but also in *Mald* 17b, ‘*beornas trymian*,’ and 305b, ‘*beornas trymedon*.’ The ASPR’s other exemplifications of this ‘[warriors, men] + *trymian*’ formula are *And* 463b, ‘*eorlas trymede*,’ *And* 1051a, ‘*oðrum trymede*,’ and *El* 35b, ‘*Feðan trymedon*.’ While the full range of the formula confirms that it is a formula or system that works by substituting various terms into the first position, in *Maldon* it seems more or less mechanically repeated. See a similar example of such repetition in the discussion of full-line parallels below, and Scragg’s lists of half-line and full-line repetitions (*Maldon* 30-2).
- 47 ‘*Gemunan*’ and ‘*mæl*’ are alliteratively linked across the caesura in *Vain* 83 and *Instr* 124.
- 48 It would also be possible, of course, to interpret *Maldon*’s unique compounds as potentially derived from a lost work no longer accessible to us.
- 49 Of course, ‘*godswurd*’ has not always been seen as a compound, perhaps because of its lack of poetic effectiveness. The editions of both Gordon and Scragg print ‘*god swurd*’ in 237a.
- 50 The evidence for a lack of knowledge of Exeter poems should (again) be stated clearly: I can find no repeated full-lines between *Maldon* and Exeter poems; also ‘*wigplegan*’ is the only lexical item I can find that is parallel only in Exeter, and the

Maldon poet clearly may have coined it independently, since *Maldon* also uses ‘guðplega’ in 61a. The half-line parallel formulas listed that involve *Juliana* and *Guthlac B* are thus the most likely indicators of a relationship, although the evidence presented above has consistently suggested that *Juliana* was available in ‘Alfred’s library’ as well as in the Exeter collection (wherever it was located). In the end, a single parallel to *Guthlac B*, I think, is not sufficient to support the hypothesis that the *Maldon* poet knew any non-Cynwulfian Exeter poems.

- 51 If we recall that *Maldon*’s extensive use of ‘hyse’ is paralleled most closely in *Daniel* (see above, note 44), then we might have evidence that the *Maldon* poet knew that Junius poem as well.
- 52 *Christ and Satan*, of course, forms ‘Liber II’ of Junius 11, and it is to be dated after Liber I, containing *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel* (see Lockett 173, for the dating of Junius Liber I to ‘c. 960-c. 990’). In this context, the one unique parallel between *Maldon* and *Christ and Satan* (‘folc and foldan,’ *Mald* 54a; *Sat* 685a) may carry special significance, suggesting that Liber II had indeed been added to Junius by the time that the *Maldon* poet seems to have accessed it. Since codicological features suggest that Liber II is an addition to Junius itself (and not to an earlier exemplar), it very likely cannot be hypothesized to belong to Junius’s exemplar, hinting that the *Maldon* poet may have consulted the Junius manuscript itself. Regardless of what we make of the ‘folc and foldan’ parallel, Lockett’s recent dating of Liber I fits well with the *Maldon* poet’s seeming access to the *Genesis* poems, *Exodus*, and possibly even *Daniel*.
- 53 See Scragg’s conclusion: ‘With the exception of the very few eastern forms cited, the spelling is consistently close to the late Old English standard of Winchester’ (*Maldon* 25). Of course, Winchester spelling was widespread and not confined to Winchester itself.
- 54 Recall, as noted above, that the other poems that can be more or less confidently dated to between 950 and 1000 are in the late Old English verse style. These include *The Metrical Psalms*, *For the Water-Elf Disease* (from Book III of Royal 12 D. xvii), *An Exhortation to Christian Living*, and *The Death of Edgar II*. The late Old English verse inscription on the Sutton brooch is dated by Okasha to ‘late tenth to early eleventh century’ (*Hand-List*

116). Ælfric's late tenth-century alliterative works will be considered in the following chapter.

- 55 See Brooks, *Early History* 270 for a list of some books that moved to Christ Church Canterbury in this period. The possibility that the Vercelli Book was compiled at Canterbury might also attest to the movement of books from Winchester to Canterbury; see Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, lxxiv-lxxix for the argument that St Augustine's, Canterbury, is the likely origin of the Vercelli compilation. The point, of course, is that *Andreas* and *Elene* seem clearly to have been in the Alfredian library (and, of course, *The Dream of the Rood*'s old Saxonisms support an Alfredian origin), and thus these poems might conceivably have moved to Canterbury from Winchester before the writing of the Vercelli manuscript.

- 1 Note that the opening of *Ælfric's Letter to Sigeward* (Crawford 15) also specifies a non-local audience: 'ÆLFRIC ABBOD GRET FREONDlice SIGWERD æt Eastholon' (Abbot Ælfric greets Sigeward at Eastholon in a friendly fashion). The one-line authorial-naming passage in Assmann II, 1 does not specify where the recipient lives: 'Ælfric abbod gret Sigefyrð freondlice!' (Abbot Ælfric greets Sigefyrth in a friendly fashion). For Ælfric's prefaces, of course, see Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*.
- 2 That is, while Clark Hall and Meritt's dictionary does attempt to identify poetic words, it does not label 'franca' as a poetic word; neither does it note the word's poetic appearances, indicating only that it appears in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*; interestingly, Skeat's edition of *Lives of Saints* is identified in that dictionary's list of abbreviations as 'Ælfric's Metrical Lives of Saints' (x).
- 3 Michael Lapidge's brief discussion 'Ælfric's Schooldays' does not address any potential Old English works Ælfric may have encountered at school; but again see Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, for the suggestion that Æthelwold was very much engaged in the study of Old English verse.
- 4 See above, [chapter 3](#), pages 132-3.
- 5 Compare the conclusion reached by Fulk 259: 'Ælfric, in his alliterative prose, also generally keeps velar and palatal g separate.'
- 6 DOE online corpus search, 'heolst-.'
- 7 For a brief discussion of Ælfric and his understanding of compound formation in the context of Wulfstan's use of compounds, see Chapman, 'Germanic Tradition' 7-8.
- 8 Hugh Magennis, in his essay 'Ælfric and Heroic Literature,' discusses both of these Ælfrician texts, for much the same reasons, though he does not focus specifically on compound words.
- 9 If we extend the analysis to non-compounds, the words 'cene,' 'cenlice,' and 'fus' are also relevant for a consideration of poetic vocabulary in these Ælfrician works. The *Dictionary of Old English (DOE)* says that 'cene' is attested about fifty times and is 'disproportionately freq[uent] in poetry'; a DoE online corpus search for the whole word 'cene' indicates that twenty Old

English occurrences of this specific spelling occur: seven in ASPR works and nine in Ælfric (eight of which are in alliterative works); the remaining four occurrences are in various prose works. Old English ‘cenlice’ appears six times in Ælfric’s alliterative works with no other attestations. Likewise, ‘fus’ has, according to the *DOE*, about sixty occurrences, ‘mainly in poetry’; at least five of the prose occurrences are in Ælfric’s alliterative works (*DOE* online corpus searches for the whole words ‘cene,’ ‘cenlice’ and ‘fus’). Here and subsequently, it is important to note, I distinguish between ‘the *DOE*’ and the ‘*DoE* online corpus.’

- 10 My summary counts two of the attestations (from two versions of Ælfric’s *Letter to Sigeweard*) to be a single occurrence; otherwise, the Ælfrician occurrences are in *Maccabees* (LS XXV) 592b; *In Natale Unius Confessoris* (Assmann IV) 248a; *Judith* (Assmann IX) 12a and 378b; *Letter to Sigeweard* (Crawford) 527, 538, and 634; *Epilogue to Judges* (Crawford) 76; *Admonitio ad Filium Spiritualem* (Norman) 54. *DoE* online corpus search for words beginning ‘herelaf-.’
- 11 Bosworth-Toller, s.v. ‘laf’; I have left out Bosworth-Toller’s ‘unlaf,’ which is less clearly a compound. Occurrences are confirmed by the following *DOE* online corpus searches: ‘-delaf-,’ ‘-menlaf-,’ ‘-llaf-,’ ‘-telaf-,’ ‘-tlaf-,’ ‘-ælaf-,’ ‘-ðlaf-,’ and ‘-rfelaf-.’
- 12 *DOE* online corpus searches for words beginning ‘flother-’ and ‘flotm-.’
- 13 *DOE* online corpus searches for words beginning ‘heahbe-,’ ‘heahðe-,’ ‘hehbe-,’ and ‘hehðe-.’
- 14 *DOE* online corpus search for words beginning ‘rædfæst-.’
- 15 *DOE* online corpus searches for words beginning ‘scyltd-,’ ‘scylt-,’ ‘sceldt-,’ ‘scelt-,’ ‘scildt-,’ and ‘scilt-.’
- 16 *DOE* online corpus searches for words beginning ‘wercst-’ and ‘weorcst-.’
- 17 *DOE* online corpus searches for words including “-ldce-” and “-ldke-.”
- 18 *DOE* online corpus searches for words beginning “-rþfæ-” and “-rðfæ-.”

- 19 Hugh Magennis notes in his essay ‘Ælfric and Heroic Literature’: ‘This is not the place to give a detailed account of Ælfric’s formulaic diction – a topic ripe for a full-scale study – but even within “The Maccabees” the recurrence of phrases and patterns of phrases is striking’ (50). See also Waterhouse, ‘Affective Language.’
- 20 DOE online corpus ordered search ‘se’ followed by ‘eadiga.’
- 21 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘-engl-’ followed by ‘cyn-.’
- 22 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘snot-’ followed by ‘wur-,’ ‘weor-,’ or ‘wyr-.’
- 23 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘wur-’/‘weor-’ followed by ‘sym’/‘sim-.’
- 24 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘æþ-’/‘æð-’ and ‘þeaw-.’
- 25 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘ea-’ and ‘geþung’/‘geðung-.’
- 26 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘anræ-’ and ‘þurhw-’/‘ðurhw-.’
- 27 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘-bug-’ and ‘-byism-.’
- 28 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘wid-’ and ‘eor-.’
- 29 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘us-,’ ‘sec-,’ and ‘bec-.’
- 30 DOE online corpus ordered search, ‘gewr-’ and ‘sec-.’
- 31 These notes appear in London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv, in a hand Ker describes as being from the middle of the twelfth century (*Catalogue* 178-9). Crawford suggests that note 28 in particular is by Ælfric, as indicated by its ‘general style’ (*Heptateuch* 422, note 1). It is not quite clear if the passage in question should be lineated poetically or as prose.
- 32 DOE online corpus ordered search: ‘-sl-,’ ‘-sw-,’ and ‘-ecg-.’
- 33 For a useful discussion of the relationship between *Æthelweard’s Chronicle* and Old English poetry, see Lutz, ‘Æthelweard’s *Chronicon*.’
- 34 DOE online corpus search, ‘prass-.’
- 35 Although approaching these questions from another direction, see the useful discussions of Ælfric and ‘heroic’ poetry by both Magennis and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne.

- 1 The only homiletic passages cited by O'Brien O'Keeffe in support of her reading of the poem's debt to 'the homiletic discourse of martyrdom' ('Deaths and Transformations' 160) are passages from Ælfric, suggesting that in this essay we might read 'Ælfrician' for O'Brien O'Keeffe's 'homiletic.'
- 2 Besides being preserved in London, British Library, Cotton Julius E. vii, Skeat's base manuscript for his edition of *Lives of Saints, The Seven Sleepers* was also present (though surviving only in fragments now) in London, British Library, Cotton Otho B. x, which Magennis describes as 'a volume of saints' lives, mostly from Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*' (*Seven Sleepers* 6).
- 3 Bodley 180 is Ker no. 305.
- 4 Outside of Wulfstan and the Bodley 180 prayer, the phrases 'wealdend 7 wyrhta' and 'ealra gesceafta' are juxtaposed only in Napier LVIII, p. 301, (where it presumably derives ultimately from Wulfstan) and in *Christ and Satan* 583b–4a, where they appear in the opposite order. These two phrases are juxtaposed nine times in Wulfstan's writings. I take the inversion to 'wyrhta 7 wealdend' in the Bodley 180 prayer as non-significant.
- 5 Although the three-syllable verse is of dubious metricality in late Old English as well as classical Old English verse, it is probably necessary to recall the use of three-syllable verses in *The Menologium* (as noted above in [chapter 3](#)) which is likely due to influence from late Old English forms.
- 6 The appendix includes a preliminary edition (with a brief commentary) of the whole of the Bodley prayer as poetic.
- 7 DOE online corpus search, 'driht-'/ 'dryht-' and 'ælmihti-'; for the 'drihten'/'miht' rhyme in Old English poems collected in the ASPR, see Bredehoft, 'Formulaic Rhyme.'
- 8 in Ælfric's normal prose, the phrase appears in *CH I VI*, 102; in alliterative works it appears in *Basil (LSIII)* 370b; *Sebastian (LS V)* 175b; *Chrysanthus & Daria (LSXXXV)* 272b; *Dominica III in Quadragesima* (Pope IV) 229b; *Interrogationes Sigewulfi* (cited from doe online corpus); *First Letter to Wulfstan* (Fehr IV) §28, §31, and §91; *Letter to Sigeweard* (crawford) 1032; doe online proximity search 'ful-'and 'galn-.'
- 9 Note that the insertion of 'heora' into '7 for ealra pinra halgana

lufan 7 heora earnungum' also makes the line less metrically compact. 'Heora' thus offers some small additional support for the notion that the Bodley 180 prayer is later than the *Min Drihten Leof* prayer. Note also that the alternation between 'haligra' (*Min Drihten Leof*) and 'halgana' (Bodley 180 prayer) would seem to have the character of formulaic reading.

- 10 See Fred C. Robinson, 'Most Immediate Context.'
- 11 All three passages were recycled (with some small changes), apparently from a source much like Vercelli XXI, into Napier XXX (145–6). See Scragg, *Vercelli* 347 and 395–403, where Napier XXX is printed.
- 12 See the recent comments of Winfried Rudolf on 'the relationship between poetry and pastoral address' in the Middle Ages in general and in the relationship between Old English homilies and verse in particular ('Journey to the Borderland' 2).
- 13 Napier XXIX is preserved uniquely in Hatton 113, which Ker, *Catalogue* 391, dates to 's. XI (3rd quarter).' Hatton 113 is the first half of Ker no. 331 and Gneuss no. 637. The portions of the homily correspond roughly to *Judgment Day II* 92–270, making up nearly half of the homily.
- 14 Cook, *The Old English Elene, Phoenix, and Physiologus* 128–32. See also the edition of Kluge. Cotton Vespasian D. xiv is Ker no. 209, from the middle twelfth century (Ker, *Catalogue* 271); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198 is Ker no. 48; the phoenix homily (Ker's item 67) occurs in the section which Ker dates palaeographically to the second half of the eleventh century (*Catalogue* 76); Ker further notes that spellings in this group of texts suggest that they 'were written in the west of England in s. xi²' (82); CCC 198 is Gneuss no. 64.
- 15 London, British Library, Royal 2 B. v is the Royal Psalter, Ker no. 249 and Gneuss no. 451. The *Min Drihten Leof* passage is an addition made around the middle eleventh century (Ker, *Catalogue* 320), possibly at Christ Church, Canterbury, given that an earlier addition (including Ker's articles *gand h*) was entered in 'a fine upright hand of the kind written at Christ Church in s. xi¹ (*Catalogue* 320). Cotton Tiberius A. iii (also from the middle eleventh century) is Ker no. 186 and Gneuss

no. 363; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391 is Ker no. 67 and gneuss no. 104; Ker identifies the hand of *Min Drihten Leofin* CCCC 391 as a Worcester hand of the middle eleventh century (*Catalogue* 115).

- 16 This prayer has been most recently edited (as prose) from the version in Cotton Tiberius A. iii by Pulsiano and McGowan, 'Four Unedited Prayers.' The appendix presents a preliminary edition of the entirety of *Min Drihten Leofas* a poem.
- 17 In the case of line 3, '7 for ealra þinra haligra lufan 7 geearnuncga,' the only collocations of these words appear in *Min Drihten Leof*, in the Bodley 180 prayer, and in Napier XXIX, where they derive from *Min Drihten Leof* (DOE online corpus proximity search 'hal-', 'luf-', 'earn-'). It is important to note that Napier XXIX and Bodley 180 agree in reading 'halgena lufan' in contrast to *Min Drihten Leof's* 'haligra lufan' (Stevenson's 'bidding prayer' has 'ealle Godes halgan,' 'Yorkshire Surveys' 10. It may be the case that Napier XXIX and the Bodley 180 prayer derive from a prior version of *Min Drihten Leof*, since all surviving versions of that text share the reading 'haligra.'
- 18 No other passages in OE collocate 'þeostor' and 'geþanc': DOE online corpus proximity search '-eost-'/'-yst-' and '-anc-'/'-onc-.'
- 19 Besides appearing in Skeat's edition of *Lives of Saints, The Seven Sleepers* homily has recently been edited separately by Hugh Magennis. The other 'anonymous' or non-Ælfrician items in Cotton Julius E vii are *Mary of Egypt* (LS XXIIIB), *Eustace* (LS XXX), and *Euphrosyne* (LS XXXIII); the scholarly history of their recognition as non-Ælfrician is conveniently summarized by Magennis, 'Contrasting Features,' 317-18.
- 20 Initial 'h' may well be ignorable in identifying late Old English alliteration, as various examples in Ælfric appear to indicate. Certainly, 'h's that precede 'r,' 'l,' and 'w' seem often to be ignored (as, indeed, sometimes appears to happen in classical poems as well), and those before vowels are also likely candidates for similar treatment.
- 21 Both words do appear in some of Ælfric's prose works, but both are most frequent in his alliterative works. Doe online corpus searches, 'neb(b)wli-' and 'weorcest-.'

- 22 In a footnote, Skeat suggests ‘strutnode’ is to be read as ‘scrutnode’ (Skeat, *LSXXIII* page 504, note 1); Magennis prints ‘scrutnode,’ describing ‘strutnode’ as ‘meaningless’ (9).
- 23 I assume, of course, that the rules for alliteration that apply here are the same as for Ælfric. Thus, the second quoted line presumably has vocalic alliteration involving the preposition ‘uppan’ (although alliteration linking ‘mann’ and ‘man’ might conceivably be possible); the sixth line either has AA-alliteration (‘mihte’ and ‘man’) or ‘n’ alliteration linking ‘nan’ and ‘na.’ The seventh line has no internal alliteration, although both ‘casere’ and ‘mode’ are alliteratively linked to elements in adjacent lines.
- 24 Alternatively, we might hypothesize that *The Seven Sleepers* is a prose text that has been partially and incompletely ‘translated’ into verse, through a process analogous to the method used in *The Meters of Boethius*.
- 25 The biblical quotation, of course, is paraphrased from I Corinthians 7:14.
- 26 DOE online corpus proximity search: ‘gif’/‘gyf,’ ‘wold-,’ and ‘libban.’ Citations from *William the Conqueror* are taken from Susan Irvine’s edition of the Peterborough Chronicle.
- 27 DOE online corpus search, ‘heahde-’ and ‘heade-’; references to these wills derive directly from the DOE online corpus. In my *Early English Metre*, I noted that ‘headeor’ seems to have been picked up by Layamon directly from *William the Conqueror* (116–17).
- 28 Ælfric uses this combination in the following places: *CH I*, XVI, 78–9, ‘þam mannun he sceal don synna forgyfennysse’; *CH I*, XXXIII, 156–7, ‘þæt he ðurh ðone ylcan gast us do ure synna forgyfennysse’; and *Dominica Pentecosten* (Pope 10) 87, ‘and he sylf gedep ealra synna forgifennysse.’ ‘Do’ is used with the verb placed after ‘synna forgifennysse’ in Vercelli XXI, 45, ‘7 þæt he us ura synna forgyfennysse do.’ Otherwise, Old English writers (including Ælfric) more frequently use ‘sellan’/‘syllan’ with ‘synna forgifennysse.’
- 29 This curse is printed by Ker, *Catalogue* xiv, but unfortunately excluded from the listings of the *Catalogue* itself as among ‘Latin texts which contain merely a phrase or two of OE’ (xiv).

The very memorability of the curse may suggest that an authentic Worcester tradition preserved it until it was recorded by William of Malmesbury; as Ealdred died in 1069 and the curse is directed at a Norman, it is closely datable to 1066x1069.

- 30 See the comments of Dorothy Whitelock, *The Peterborough Chronicle* 28.
- 31 As noted by Nicholas Brooks: ‘It would therefore seem that Wulfstan had initiated this huge enterprise of Anglo-Norman historiography [the *Chronicon ex Chronicis*] at Worcester’ (‘Introduction’ 9).
- 32 Orchard cites a variety of essays that have ‘swelled the notional corpus of Coleman’s extant work, both signed and unsigned, to (now) perhaps 20 notes in seven manuscripts’ (‘Parallel lives’ 41; see also Orchard’s notes 14 and 16–17 on this same page).
- 33 Hatton 115 is Ker no. 332 and Gneuss no. 639; CCCC 303 is Ker no. 57.
- 34 Cubbin identifies Ealdred as the figure most likely to have been behind the bulk of the D Chronicle (lxxviii–lxxix), while for the period after ealdred’s death in 1069, Cubbin suggests, ‘The best conjecture is that D may have gone to a foundation near Worcester if not in Worcester itself’ (lxxx).
- 35 DOE online corpus ordered proximity search: ‘se-’ and ‘æðela-’ or ‘æþela-.’ The alternative word order, with ‘se æðela’ before the noun or proper noun is far more common in all sorts of texts.

- 1 See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, for a fine discussion of transitions in literacy traditions relating to (primarily classical) Old English verse. While I find O'Brien o'Keeffe's term 'transitional literacy' very effective, her association of that term with the specific transition from orality to literacy is less persuasive, partly because literate practices seem always to be in a state of transition.
- 2 It is useful to note that this conclusion meshes perfectly with R.D. Fulk's chronological conclusions, in which '*Beowulf*, *Genesis A*, and *Daniel* are the most conservative of the longer poems,' while '*Andreas* and the signed works of Cynewulf would appear to be measurably later' (*History* 348).
- 3 It is important, I think, to distinguish between 'oral' and 'oral-formulaic': the latter term designates a specific compositional mode (and its associated audience functions and roles) that is not congruent with orality more generally.
- 4 The significance of placing a copy of *Beowulf* at Alfred's court, of course, lies not only in identifying one audience for the poem, but for helping to clarify, in some degree, just where and when the poem was not composed.
- 5 This is true although, as also discussed in [chapter 3](#), these poems (like *Maldon*) do contain occasional verses that suggest the currency of late Old English metrical forms.